

*ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS*

FIELDING

BY

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

FROM a critical point of view, the works of Fielding have received abundant examination at the hands of a long line of distinguished writers. Of these, the latest is by no means the least; and as Mr. Leslie Stephen's brilliant studies, in the recent *édition de luxe* and the *Cornhill Magazine*, are now in every one's hands, it is perhaps no more than a wise discretion which has prompted me to confine my attention more strictly to the purely biographical side of the subject. In the present memoir, therefore, I have made it my duty, primarily, to verify such scattered anecdotes respecting Fielding as have come down to us; to correct (I hope not obtrusively) a few mis-statements which have crept into previous accounts; and to add such supplementary details as I have been able to discover for myself.

In this task I have made use of the following authorities:—

I. Arthur Murphy's *Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding, Esq.* This was prefixed to the first collected edition of Fielding's works published by Andrew Millar in April 1762; and it continued for a long time to be the recognised authority for Fielding's life. It is possible that it fairly reproduces his personality, as presented by contemporary tradition; but it is misleading in its facts, and needlessly diffuse. Under

pretence of respecting "the Manes of the dead," the writer seems to have found it pleasanter to fill his space with vagrant discussions on the "Middle Comedy of the Greeks" and the machinery of the *Rape of the Lock*, than to make the requisite biographical inquiries. This is the more to be deplored, because, in 1762, Fielding's widow, brother, and sister, as well as his friend Lyttelton, were still alive, and trustworthy information should have been procurable.

II. Watson's *Life of Henry Fielding, Esq.* This is usually to be found prefixed to a selection of Fielding's works issued at Edinburgh. It also appeared as a volume in 1807, although there is no copy of it in this form at the British Museum. It carries Murphy a little farther, and corrects him in some instances. But its author had clearly never even seen the *Miscellanies* of 1743, with their valuable Preface, for he speaks of them as one volume, and in apparent ignorance of their contents.

III. Sir Walter Scott's biographical sketch for Ballantyne's *Novelist's Library*. This was published in 1821; and is now included in the writer's *Miscellaneous Prose Works*. Sir Walter made no pretence to original research, and even spoke slightly of this particular work; but it has all the charm of his practised and genial pen.

IV. Roscoe's Memoir, compiled for the one-volume edition of Fielding, published by Washbourne and others in 1840.

V. Thackeray's well-known lecture, in the *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century*, 1853.

VI. *The Life of Henry Fielding; with Notices of his Writings, his Times, and his Contemporaries*. By Frederick Lawrence. 1855. This is an exceedingly painstaking book; and constitutes the first serious attempt at a biography. Its chief defect—as pointed out at the time of its appearance—is an ill-judged emulation of

Forster's *Goldsmith*. The author attempted to make Fielding a literary centre, which is impossible ; and the attempt has involved him in needless digressions. He is also not always careful to give chapter and verse for his statements.

VII. Thomas Keightley's papers *On the Life and Writings of Henry Fielding* in *Fraser's Magazine* for January and February 1858. These, prompted by Mr. Lawrence's book, are most valuable, if only for the author's frank distrust of his predecessors. They are the work of an enthusiast, and a very conscientious examiner. If, as reported, Mr. Keightley himself meditated a life of Fielding, it is much to be regretted that he never carried out his intention.

Upon the two last-mentioned works I have chiefly relied in the preparation of this study. I have freely availed myself of the material that both authors collected, verifying it always, and extending it wherever I could. Of my other sources of information—pamphlets, reviews, memoirs, and newspapers of the day—the list would be too long ; and sufficient references to them are generally given in the body of the text. I will only add that I think there is scarcely a quotation of importance in these pages which has not been compared with the original ; and, except where otherwise stated, all extracts from Fielding himself are taken from the first editions.

At this distance of time, new facts respecting a man of whom so little has been recorded require to be announced with considerable caution. Some definite additions to Fielding lore I have, however, been enabled to make. Thanks to the late Colonel J. L. Chester, who was engaged, only a few weeks before his death, in friendly investigations on my behalf, I am able to give, for the first time, the date and place of Fielding's second marriage, and the baptismal dates of all the children by that marriage, except the eldest. I

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# FIELDING.

## CHAPTER I.

### EARLY YEARS—FIRST PLAYS.

LIKE his contemporary Smollett, Henry Fielding came of an ancient family, and might, in his Horatian moods, have traced his origin to Inachus. The lineage of the house of Denbigh, as given in Burke, fully justifies the splendid but sufficiently quoted eulogy of Gibbon. From that first Jeffrey of Hapsburgh, who came to England, *temp.* Henry III., and assumed the name of Fieldeng, or Filding, "from his father's pretensions to the dominions of Lauffenbourg and Rinfilding," the future novelist could boast a long line of illustrious ancestors. There was a Sir William Feilding killed at Tewkesbury, and a Sir Everard who commanded at Stoke. Another Sir William, a staunch Royalist, was created Earl of Denbigh, and died in fighting King Charles's battles. Of his two sons, the elder, Basil, who succeeded to the title, was a Parliamentarian, and served at Edgehill under Essex. George, his second son, was raised to the peerage of Ireland as Viscount Callan, with succession to the earldom of Desmond; and from this, the younger branch of the Denbigh family, Henry Fielding directly descended. The Earl of Des-

mond's fifth son, John, entered the Church, becoming Canon of Salisbury and Chaplain to William III. By his wife Bridget, daughter of Scipio Cockain, Esq., of Somerset, he had three sons and three daughters. Edmund, the third son, was a soldier, who fought with distinction under Marlborough. When about the age of thirty, he married Sarah, daughter of Sir Henry Gould, Knt., of Sharpham Park, near Glastonbury, in Somerset, and one of the Judges of the King's Bench. These last were the parents of the novelist, who was born at Sharpham Park on the 22d of April 1707. One of Dr. John Fielding's nieces, it may here be added, married the first Duke of Kingston, becoming the mother of Lady Mary Pierrepont, afterwards Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who was thus Henry Fielding's second cousin. She had, however, been born in 1689, and was consequently some years his senior.

According to a pedigree given in Nichols (*History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*), Edmund Fielding was only a lieutenant when he married; and it is even not improbable (as Mr. Keightley conjectures from the nearly secret union of *Lieutenant* Booth and Amelia in the later novel) that the match may have been a stolen one. At all events, the bride continued to reside at her father's house; and the fact that Sir Henry Gould, by his will made in March 1706, left his daughter £3000, which was to be invested "in the purchase either of a Church or Colledge lease, or of lands of Inheritance," for her sole use, her husband having "nothing to doe with it," would seem (as Mr. Keightley suggests) to indicate a distrust of his military, and possibly impecunious, son-in-law. This money, it is also important to remember, was to come to her children at her death. Sir

Henry Gould did not long survive the making of his will, and died in March 1710.<sup>1</sup> The Fieldings must then have removed to a small house at East Stour (now Stower), in Dorsetshire, where Sarah Fielding was born in the following November. It may be that this property was purchased with Mrs. Fielding's money; but information is wanting upon the subject. At East Stour, according to the extracts from the parish register given in Hutchins's *History of Dorset*, four children were born,—namely, Sarah, above mentioned, afterwards the authoress of *David Simple*, Anne, Beatrice, and another son, Edmund. Edmund, says Arthur Murphy, "was an officer in the marine service," and (adds Mr. Lawrence) "died young." Anne died at East Stour in August 1716. Of Beatrice nothing further is known. These would appear to have been all the children of Edmund Fielding by his first wife, although, as Sarah Fielding is styled on her monument at Bath the *second* daughter of General Fielding, it is not impossible that another daughter may have been born at Sharpham Park.

At East Stour the Fieldings certainly resided until April 1718, when Mrs. Fielding died, leaving her elder son a boy of not quite eleven years of age. How much longer the family remained there is unrecorded; but it is clear that a great part of Henry Fielding's childhood must have been spent by the "pleasant Banks of sweetly-winding Stour" which passes through it, and to which he subsequently refers in *Tom Jones*. His educa-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Keightley, who seems to have seen the will, dates it—doubtless by a slip of the pen—May 1708. Reference to the original, however, now at Somerset House, shows the correct date to be March 8, 1706, before which time the marriage of Fielding's parents must therefore be placed.



tion during this time was confided to a certain Mr Oliver, whom Lawrence designates the "family chaplain." Keightley supposes that he was the curate of East Stour; but Hutchins, a better authority than either, says that he was the clergyman of Motcombe, a neighbouring village. Of this gentleman, according to Murphy, Parson Trulliber in *Joseph Andrews* is a "very humorous and striking portrait." It is certainly more humorous than complimentary.

From Mr. Oliver's fostering care—and the result shows that, whatever may have been the pig-dealing propensities of Parson Trulliber, it was not entirely profitless—Fielding was transferred to Eton. When this took place is not known; but at that time boys entered the school much earlier than they do now, and it was probably not long after his mother's death. The Eton boys were then, as at present, divided into collegers and oppidans. There are no registers of oppidans before the end of the last century; but the Provost of Eton has been good enough to search the college lists from 1715 to 1735, and there is no record of any Henry Fielding, nor indeed of any Fielding at all. It may therefore be concluded that he was an oppidan. No particulars of his stay at Eton have come down to us; but it is to be presumed Murphy's statement that, "when he left the place, he was said to be uncommonly versed in the Greek authors, and an early master of the Latin classics," is not made without foundation.<sup>1</sup> We have also his own authority (in *Tam*

<sup>1</sup> Fielding's own words in the verses to Walpole some years later scarcely go so far:—

"*Tuscan* and *French* are in my Head;  
*Latin* I write, and *Greek* I—read."



*Jones*) for supposing that he occasionally, if not frequently, sacrificed "with true *Spartan* devotion" at the "birchen Altar," of which a representation is to be found in Mr. Maxwell Lyte's history of the College. And it may fairly be inferred that he took part in the different sports and pastimes of the day, such as Conquering Lobs, Steal baggage, Chuck, Starecaps, and so forth. Nor does it need any strong effort of imagination to conclude that he bathed in "Sandy hole" or "Cuckow ware," attended the cock-fights in Bedford's Yard and the bull-baiting in Bachelor's Acre, drank mild punch at the "Christopher," and, no doubt, was occasionally brought back by Jack Cutler, "Pursuivant of Runaways," to make his explanations to Dr. Bland the Head-Master, or Francis Goode the Usher. Among his school-fellows were some who subsequently attained to high dignities in the State, and still remained his friends. Foremost of these was George Lyttelton, later the statesman and orator, who had already commenced poet as an Eton boy with his "Soliloquy of a Beauty in the Country." Another was the future Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, the wit and squib-writer, then known as Charles Hanbury only. A third was Thomas Winnington, for whom, in after years, Fielding fought hard with brain and pen when Tory scribblers assailed his memory. Of those who must be regarded as contemporaries merely, were William Pitt, the "Great Commoner," and yet greater Earl of Chatham; Henry Fox, Lord Holland; and Charles Pratt, Earl Camden. Gilbert West, the translator of Pindar, may also have been at Eton in Fielding's time, as he was only a year older, and was intimate with Lyttelton. Thomas Augustine Arne, again, famous in days to come as Dr. Arne, was

doubtless also at this date practising sedulously upon that "miserable cracked common flute," with which tradition avers he was wont to torment his school-fellows. Gray and Horace Walpole belong to a later period.

During his stay at Eton, Fielding had been rapidly developing from a boy into a young man. When he left school it is impossible to say; but he was probably seventeen or eighteen years of age, and it is at this stage of his career that must be fixed an occurrence which one of his biographers places much farther on. This is his earliest recorded love-affair. At Lyme Regis there resided a young lady, who, in addition to great personal charms, had the advantage of being the only daughter and heiress of one Solomon Andrew, deceased, a merchant of considerable local reputation. Lawrence says that she was Fielding's cousin. This may be so; but the statement is unsupported by any authority. It is certain, however, that her father was dead, and that she was living "in maiden meditation" at Lyme with one of her guardians, Mr. Andrew Tucker. In his chance visits to that place, young Fielding appears to have become desperately enamoured of her, and to have sadly flattered the Dorset dovescotes by his pertinacious and undesirable attentions. At one time he seems to have actually meditated the abduction of his "flame," for an entry in the town archives, discovered by Mr. George Roberts, sometime Mayor of Lyme, who tells the story, declares that Andrew Tucker, Esq., went in fear of his life "owing to the behaviour of Henry Fielding and his attendant, or man." Such a state of things (especially when guardians have sons of their own) is clearly not to be endured; and Miss Andrew was prudently trans-

ferred to the care of another guardian, Mr. Rhodes of Modbury, in South Devon, to whose son, a young gentleman of Oxford, she was promptly married. Burke (*Landed Gentry*, 1858) dates the marriage in 1726, a date which is practically confirmed by the baptism of a child at Modbury in April of the following year. Burke further describes the husband as Mr. Ambrose Rhodes of Buckland House, Buckland-Tout-Saints. His son, Mr. Rhodes of Bellair, near Exeter, was gentleman of the Privy Chamber to George III. ; and one of his descendants possessed a picture which passed for the portrait of Sophia Western. The tradition of the Tucker family pointed to Miss Andrew as the original of Fielding's heroine ; but though such a supposition is intelligible, it is untenable, since he says distinctly (Book XIII. chap. i. of *Tom Jones*) that his model was his first wife, whose likeness he moreover draws very specifically in another place, by declaring that she resembled Margaret Cecil, Lady Ranelagh, and, more nearly, "the famous Dutchess of Mazarine."<sup>1</sup>

With this early escapade is perhaps to be connected what seems to have been one of Fielding's earliest literary efforts. This is a modernisation in burlesque octosyllabic verse of part of Juvenal's sixth satire. In the "Preface" to the later published *Miscellanies*, it is said to have been "originally sketched out before he was Twenty," and to have constituted "all the Revenge taken by an injured Lover." But it must have been largely revised subsequent to that date, for it contains references to Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Woffington, Cibber the younger, and even to Richardson's *Pamela*. It has no special merit, although some of the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix No. I. : Fielding and Sarah Andrew.

couplets have the true Swiftian turn. If Murphy's statement be correct, that the author "went from Eton to Leyden," it must have been planned at the latter place, where, he tells us in the preface to *Don Quixote in England*, he also began that comedy. Notwithstanding these literary distractions, he is nevertheless reported to have studied the civilians "with a remarkable application for about two years." At the expiration of this time, remittances from home failing, he was obliged to forego the lectures of the "learned Vitriarius" (then Professor of Civil Law at Leyden University), and return to London, which he did at the beginning of 1728 or the end of 1727.

The fact was that his father, never a rich man, had married again. His second wife was a widow named Eleanor Rasa; and by this time he was fast acquiring a second family. Under the pressure of his growing cares, he found himself, however willing, as unable to maintain his eldest son in London as he had previously been to discharge his expenses at Leyden. Nominally, he made him an allowance of two hundred a year; but this, as Fielding himself explained, "any body might pay that would." The consequence was, that not long after the arrival of the latter in the Metropolis he had given up all idea of pursuing the law, to which his mother's legal connections had perhaps first attracted him, and had determined to adopt the more seductive occupation of living by his wits. At this date he was in the prime of youth. From the portrait by Hogarth representing him at a time when he was broken in health and had lost his teeth, it is difficult to reconstruct his likeness at twenty. But we may fairly assume the "high-



arched Roman nose" with which his enemies reproached him, the dark eyes, the prominent chin, and the humorous expression; and it is clear that he must have been tall and vigorous, for he was over six feet when he died, and had been remarkably strong and active. Add to this that he inherited a splendid constitution, with an unlimited capacity for enjoyment, and we have a fair idea of Henry Fielding at that moment of his career, when with passions "tremblingly alive all o'er"—as Murphy says—he stood,

"This way and that dividing the swift mind,"

between the professions of hackney-writer and hackney-coachman. His natural bias was towards literature, and his opportunities, if not his inclinations, directed him to dramatic writing.

It is not necessary to attempt any detailed account of the state of the stage at this epoch. Nevertheless, if only to avoid confusion in the future, it will be well to enumerate the several London theatres in 1728, the more especially as the list is by no means lengthy. First and foremost there was the old Opera House in the Haymarket, built by Vanbrugh, as far back as 1705, upon the site now occupied by Her Majesty's Theatre. This was the home of that popular Italian song which so excited the anger of thorough-going Britons; and here, at the beginning of 1728, they were performing Handel's opera of *Siroe*, and delighting the *cognoscenti* by *Dite che sù*, the echo-air in the same composer's *Tolomeo*. Opposite the Opera House, and, in position, only "a few feet distant" from the existing Haymarket Theatre, was the New, or Little Theatre in the Haymarket, which, from

the fact that it had been opened eight years before by "the French Comedians," was also sometimes styled the French House. Next comes the no-longer-existent theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, which Christopher Rich had rebuilt in 1714, and which his son John had made notorious for pantomimes. Here the *Beggar's Opera*, precursor of a long line of similar productions, had just been successfully produced. Finally, most ancient of them all, there was the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane, otherwise the King's Play House, or Old House. The virtual patentees at this time were the actors Colley Cibber, Robert Wilks, and Barton Booth. The two former were just playing the *Provok'd Husband*, in which the famous Mrs. Oldfield (Pope's "Narcissa") had created a *furor* by her assumption of Lady Townley. These, in February 1728, were the four principal London theatres. Goodman's Fields, where Garriek made his *début*, was not opened until the following year, and Covent Garden belongs to a still later date.

Fielding's first dramatic essay—or, to speak more precisely, the first of his dramatic essays that was produced upon the stage—was a five-act comedy entitled *Love in Several Masques*. It was played at Drury Lane in February 1728, succeeding the *Provok'd Husband*. In his "Preface" the young author refers to the disadvantage under which he laboured in following close upon that comedy, and also in being "cotemporary with an Entertainment which engrosses the whole Talk and Admiration of the Town,"—i.e. the *Beggar's Opera*. He also acknowledges the kindness of Wilks and Cibber "previous to its Representation," and the fact that he had thus acquired their suffrages makes it doubtful



whether his stay at Leyden was not really briefer than is generally supposed, or that he left Eton much earlier. In either case he must have been in London some months before *Love in Several Masques* appeared, for a first play by an untried youth of twenty, however promising, is not easily brought upon the boards in any era; and from his own utterances in *Pasquin*, ten years later, it is clear that it was no easier then than now. The sentiments of the Fustian of that piece in the following protest probably give an accurate picture of the average dramatic experiences of Henry Fielding:—

“These little things, Mr. *Sneerwell*, will sometimes happen. Indeed a Poet undergoes a great deal before he comes to his Third Night; first with the Muses, who are humorous Ladies, and must be attended; for if they take it into their Head at any time to go abroad and leave you, you will pump your Brain in vain: Then, Sir, with the Master of a *Play-house* to get it acted, whom you generally follow a quarter of a Year before you know whether he will receive it or no; and then perhaps he tells you it won't do, and returns it you again, reserving the Subject, and perhaps the Name, which he brings out in his next *Pantomime*; but if he should receive the Play, then you must attend again to get it writ out into Parts, and Rehears'd. Well, Sir, at last the Rehearsals begin; then, Sir, begins another Scene of Trouble with the Actors, some of whom dont like their Parts, and all are continually plaguing you with Alterations: At length, after having waded thro' all these Difficulties, his [the ?] Play appears on the Stage, where one Man Hisses out of Resentment to the Author; a Second out of Dislike to the House; a Third out of Dislike to the Actor; a Fourth out of Dislike to the Play; a Fifth for the Joke sake; a Sixth to keep all the rest in Company. Enemies abuse him, Friends give him up, the Play is damn'd, and the Author goes to the Devil, so ends the Farce.”

To which *Sneerwell* replies, with much promptitude:

"The Tragedy rather, I think, Mr. *Fustian*." But whatever may have been its preliminary difficulties, Fielding's first play was not exposed to so untoward a fate. It was well received. As might be expected in a beginner, and as indeed the references in the Preface to Wycherley and Congreve would lead us to expect, it was an obvious attempt in the manner of those then all-popular writers. The dialogue is ready and witty. But the characters have that obvious defect which Lord Beaconsfield recognised when he spoke in later life of his own earliest efforts. "Books written by boys," he says, "which pretend to give a picture of manners and to deal in knowledge of human nature must necessarily be founded on affectation." To this rule the personages of *Love in Several Masques* are no exception. They are drawn rather from the stage than from life, and there is little constructive skill in the plot. A certain booby squire, Sir Positive Trap, seems like a first indication of some of the later successes in the novels; but the rest of the *dramatis persone* are puppets. The success of the piece was probably owing to the acting of Mrs. Oldfield, who took the part of Lady Matchless, a character closely related to the Lady Townleys and Lady Betty Modishes, in which she won her triumphs. She seems, indeed, to have been unusually interested in this comedy, for she consented to play in it notwithstanding a "slight indisposition" contracted "by her violent Fatigue in the Part of Lady Townly," and she assisted the author with her corrections and advice—perhaps with her influence as an actress. Fielding's distinguished kinswoman Lady Mary Wortley Montagu also read the MS. Looking to certain scenes in it, the protestation in the Prologue—

"Nought shall offend the Fair Ones Ears to-day,  
Which they might blush to hear, or blush to say"—

has an air of insincerity, although, contrasted with some of the writer's later productions, *Love in Several Masques* is comparatively pure. But he might honestly think that the work which had received the *imprimatur* of a stage-queen and a lady of quality should fairly be regarded as morally blameless, and it is not necessary to bring any bulk of evidence to prove that the morality of 1728 differed from the morality of to-day.

To the last-mentioned year is ascribed a poem entitled the "*Masquerade*." Inscribed to C—t H—d—g—r. By Lemuel Gulliver, Poet Laureate to the King of Lilliput." In this Fielding made his satirical contribution to the attacks on those impure gatherings organised by the notorious Heidegger, which Hogarth had not long before stigmatised pictorially in the plate known to collectors as the "large Masquerade Ticket." As verse this performance is worthless, and it is not very forcibly on the side of good manners; but the ironic dedication has a certain touch of Fielding's later fashion. Two other poetical pieces, afterwards included in the *Miscellanies* of 1743, also bear the date of 1728. One is *A Description of U—n G—* (alias *New Hog's Norton*) in *Com. Hants*, which Mr. Keightley has identified with Upton Grey, near Odiham, in Hampshire. It is a burlesque description of a tumble-down country-house in which the writer was staying, and is addressed to Rosalinda. The other is entitled *To Euthalia*, from which it must be concluded that, in 1728, Sarah Andrew had found more than one successor. But in spite of some biographers, and of the apparent encouragement given to his first comedy, Fielding does

not seem to have followed up dramatic authorship with equal vigour, or at all events with equal success. His real connection with the stage does not begin until January 1730, when the *Temple Beau* was produced by Giffard the actor at the theatre in Goodman's Fields, which had then just been opened by Thomas Odell; and it may be presumed that his incentive was rather want of funds than desire of fame. *The Temple Beau* certainly shows an advance upon its predecessor; but it is an advance in the same direction, imitation of Congreve; and although Geneste ranks it among the best of Fielding's plays, it is doubtful whether modern criticism would sustain his verdict. It ran for a short time, and was then withdrawn. The Prologue was the work of James Ralph, afterwards Fielding's colleague in the *Champion*, and it thus refers to the prevailing taste. The *Beggar's Opera* had killed Italian song, but now a new danger had arisen,—

“*Humour and Wit, in each politer Age,  
Triumphant, rear'd the Trophies of the Stage :  
But only Farce, and Shew, will now go down,  
And Harlequin's the Darling of the Town.*”

As if to confirm his friend's opinion, Fielding's next piece combined the popular ingredients above referred to. In March following he produced at the Haymarket, under the pseudonym of Scriblerus Secundus, *The Author's Farce*, with a “Puppet Show” called *The Pleasures of the Town*. In the Puppet Show, Henley, the Clare-Market Orator, and Samuel Johnson, the quack author of the popular *Hurlothrumbo*, were smartly satirised, as also was the fashionable craze for Opera and Pantomime. But the most enduring part of this odd



medley is the farce which occupies the two first acts, and under thin disguises no doubt depicts much which was within the writer's experience. At all events, Luckless, the author in the play, has more than one of the characteristics which distinguish the traditional portrait of Fielding himself in his early years. He wears a laced coat, is in love, writes plays, and cannot pay his landlady, who declares, with some show of justice, that she "would no more depend on a Benefit-Night of an un-acted Play, than she would on a Benefit-Ticket in an un-drawn Lottery." "Her Floor (she laments) is all spoil'd with Ink—her Windows with Verses, and her Door has been almost beat down with Duns." But the most humorous scenes in the play—scenes really admirable in their ironic delineation of the seamy side of authorship in 1730—are those in which Mr. Bookweight, the publisher—the Curl or Osborne of the period—is shown surrounded by the obedient hacks, who feed at his table on "good Milk-porridge, very often twice a Day," and manufacture the murders, ghost-stories, political pamphlets, and translations from Virgil (out of Dryden) with which he supplies his customers. Here is one of them as good as any :—

"Bookweight. So, Mr. Index, what News with you?

Index. I have brought my Bill, Sir.

Book. What's here?—for fitting the Motto of *Risum teneatis Amici* to a dozen Pamphlets at Sixpence per each, Six Shillings—For *Omnia vincit Amor, & nos cedamus Amori*, Sixpence—For *Difficile est Satyram non scribere*, Sixpence—Hum! hum! hum! Sum total, for Thirty-six Latin Motto's, Eighteen Shillings; ditto *English*, One Shilling and Ninepence; ditto *Greek*, Four, Four Shillings. These *Greek* Motto's are excessively dear.

*Ind.* If you have them cheaper at either of the Universities, I will give you mine for nothing.

*Book.* You shall have your Money immediately, and pray remember that I must have two *Latin* Seditious Motto's and one *Greek* Moral Motto for Pamphlets by to-morrow Morning. . . .

*Ind.* Sir, I shall provide them. Be pleas'd to look on that, Sir, and print me Five hundred Proposals, and as many Receipts.

*Book.* Proposals for printing by Subscription a new Translation of Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods and his Tusculan Questions*, by *Jeremy Index*, Esq. : I am sorry you have undertaken this, for it prevents a Design of mine.

*Ind.* Indeed, Sir, it does not, for you see all of the Book that I ever intend to publish. It is only a handsome Way of asking one's Friends for a Guinea.

*Book.* Then you have not translated a Word of it, perhaps.

*Ind.* Not a single Syllable.

*Book.* Well, you shall have your Proposals forthwith ; but I desire you wou'd be a little more reasonable in your Bills for the future, or I shall deal with you no longer ; for I have a certain Fellow of a College, who offers to furnish me with Second-hand Motto's out of the *Spectator* for Two-pence each.

*Ind.* Sir, I only desire to live by my Goods, and I hope you will be pleas'd to allow some difference between a neat fresh Piece, piping hot out of the Classics, and old thread-bare worn-out Stuff that has past thro' ev'ry Pedant's Mouth. . . ."

The latter part of this amusing dialogue, referring to Mr. Index's translation from Cicero, was added in an amended version of the *Author's Farce*, which appeared some years later, and in which Fielding depicts the portrait of another all-powerful personage in the literary life,—the actor-manager. This, however, will be more conveniently treated under its proper date, and it is only necessary to say here that the slight sketches of Marplay and



Sparkish given in the first edition, were presumably intended for Cibber and Wilks, with whom, notwithstanding the "civil and kind Behaviour" for which he had thanked them in the "Preface" to *Love in Several Masques*, the young dramatist was now, it seems, at war. In the introduction to the *Miscellanies*, he refers to "a slight Pique" with Wilks; and it is not impossible that the key to the difference may be found in the following passage:—

"*Sparkish*. What dost think of the Play ?

*Marplay*. It may be a very good one, for ought I know ; but *I know the Author has no Interest*.

*Spark*. Give me Interest, and rat the Play.

*Mar*. Rather rat the Play which has no Interest. Interest sways as much in the Theatre as at Court.—And you know it is not always the Companion of Merit in either."

The handsome student from Leyden—the potential Congreve who wrote *Love in Several Masques*, and had Lady Mary Wortley Montagu for patroness, might fairly be supposed to have expectations which warranted the civilities of Messrs. Wilks and Cibber; but the "Luckless" of two years later had probably convinced them that his dramatic performances did not involve their *sine qua non* of success. Under these circumstances nothing perhaps could be more natural than that they should play their parts in his little satire.

We have dwelt at some length upon the *Author's Farce*, because it is the first of Fielding's plays in which, leaving the "wit-traps" of Wycherley and Congreve, he deals with the direct censure of contemporary folly, and because, apart from translation and adaptation, it is in this field that his most brilliant theatrical successes were

won. For the next few years he continued to produce comedies and farces with great rapidity, both under his own name, and under the pseudonym of Scriblerus Secundus. Most of these show manifest signs of haste, and some are recklessly immodest. We shall confine ourselves to one or two of the best, and do little more than enumerate the others. Of these latter, the *Coffee-House Politician*; or, *The Justice caught in his own Trap*, 1730, succeeded the *Author's Farce*. The leading idea, that of a tradesman who neglects his shop for "foreign affairs," appears to be derived from Addison's excellent character-sketch in the *Tatler* of the "Political Upholsterer." This is the more likely, in that Arne the musician, whose father is generally supposed to have been Addison's original, was Fielding's contemporary at Eton. Justice Squeezum, another character contained in this play, is a kind of first draft of the later Justice Thrasher in *Amelia*. The representation of the trading justice on the stage, however, was by no means new, since Justice Quorum in Coffey's *Beggar's Wedding* (with whom, as will appear presently, Fielding's name has been erroneously associated) exhibits similar characteristics. Omitting for the moment the burlesque of *Tom Thumb*, the *Coffee-House Politician* was followed by the *Letter Writers*; or, *A new Way to Keep a Wife at Home*, 1731, a brisk little farce, with one vigorously drawn character, that of Jack Commons, a young university rake; the *Grub-Street Opera*, 1731; the farce of the *Lottery*, 1731, in which the famous Mrs. Clive, then Miss Raftor, appeared; the *Modern Husband*, 1732; the *Covent Garden Tragedy*, 1732, a broad and rather riotous burlesque of Ambrose Philips' *Distrest Mother*; and the *Debauchees*; or, *The Jesuit Caught*, 1732—which

was based upon the then debated story of Father Girard and Catherine Cadière.

Neither of the two last-named pieces is worthy of the author, and their strongest condemnation in our day is that they were condemned in their own for their unbridled license, the *Grub Street Journal* going so far as to say that they had "met with the universal detestation of the Town." The *Modern Husband*, which turns on that most loathsome of all commercial pursuits, the traffic of a husband in his wife's dishonour, appears, oddly enough, to have been regarded by its author with especial complacency. Its prologue lays stress upon the moral purpose; it was dedicated to Sir Robert Walpole; and from a couple of letters printed in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Correspondence*, it is clear that it had been submitted to her perusal. It had, however, no great success upon the stage, and the chief thing worth remembering about it is that it afforded his last character to Wilks, who played the part of Bellamant. That "slight Pique," of which mention has been made, was no doubt by this time a thing of the past.

But if most of the works in the foregoing list can hardly be regarded as creditable to Fielding's artistic or moral sense, one of them at least deserves to be excepted, and that is the burlesque of *Tom Thumb*. This was first brought out in 1730 at the little theatre in the Haymarket, where it met with a favourable reception. In the following year it was enlarged to three acts (in the first version there had been but two), and reproduced at the same theatre as the *Tragedy of Tragedies*; or, *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*, "with the Annotations of H. Scriblerus Secundus." It is certainly one

of the best burlesques ever written. As Baker observes in his *Biographia Dramatica*, it may fairly be ranked as a sequel to Buckingham's *Rehearsal*, since it includes the absurdities of nearly all the writers of tragedies from the period when that piece stops to 1730. Among the authors satirised are Nat. Lee, Thomson (whose famous

"O Sophonisba, Sophonisba, O!"

is parodied by

"O Huncamunca, Huncamunca, O!"),

Banks's *Earl of Essex*, a favourite play at Bartholomew Fair, the *Busiris* of Young, and the *Aurengzebe* of Dryden, etc. The annotations, which abound in transparent references to Dr. B[entle]y, Mr. T[heobald], Mr. D[enni]s, are excellent imitations of contemporary pedantry. One example, elicited in Act 1 by a reference to "giants," must stand for many:—

"That learned Historian Mr. S——n in the third Number of his Criticism on our Author, takes great Pains to explode this Passage. It is, says he, difficult to guess what Giants are here meant, unless the Giant *Despair* in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, or the giant *Greatness* in the *Royal Villain*; for I have heard of no other sort of Giants in the Reign of King Arthur. *Petrus Burmanus* makes three *Tom Thumbs*, one whereof he supposes to have been the same Person whom the *Greeks* called *Hercules*, and that by these Giants are to be understood the *Centaur*s slain by that Heroe. Another *Tom Thumb* he contends to have been no other than the *Hermes Trismegistus* of the *Antients*. The third *Tom Thumb* he places under the Reign of King Arthur; to which third *Tom Thumb*, says he, the Actions of the other two were attributed. Now, tho' I know that this Opinion is supported by an Assertion of *Justus Lipsius*, *Thomam illum Thumbum non alium quam*



*Herculem fuisse satis constat*; yet shall I venture to oppose one Line of Mr. *Midwinter*, against them all,

*In Arthurs' Court Tom Thumb did live.*

"But then, says Dr. B——y, if we place *Tom Thumb* in the Court of King *Arthur*, it will be proper to place that Court out of *Britain*, where no Giants were ever heard of. *Spencer*, in his *Fairy Queen*, is of another Opinion, where describing *Albion*, he says,

Far within, a salvage Nation dwelt  
Of hideous Giants.

And in the same canto :

*Then Elfar, with two Brethren Giants had*  
*The one of which had two Heads,—*  
*The other three.*

*Risum teneatis, Amici."*

Of the play itself it is difficult to give an idea by extract, as nearly every line travesties some tragic passage once familiar to play-goers, and now utterly forgotten. But the following lines from one of the speeches of Lord Grizzle—a part admirably acted by Liston in later years<sup>1</sup>—are a fair specimen of its ludicrous use (or rather abuse) of simile:—

"Yet think not long, I will my Rival bear,  
Or unreveng'd the slighted Willow wear ;  
The gloomy, brooding Tempest now confin'd,  
Within the hollow Caverns of my Mind,  
In dreadful Whirl, shall rowl along the Coasts,  
Shall thin the Land of all the Men it boasts,  
And cram up ev'ry Chink of Hell with Ghosts.  
So have I seen, in some dark Winter's Day,  
A sudden Storm rush down the Sky's High-Way,  
Sweep thro' the Streets with terrible ding-dong,  
Gush thro' the Spouts, and wash whole Crowds along.

---

<sup>1</sup> Compare Hazlitt, *On the Comic Writers of the Last Century*.



The crowded Shops, the thronging Verrain skreen,  
Together cram the Dirty and the Clean,  
And not one Shoe-Boy in the Street is seen."

In the modern version of Kane O'Hara, to which songs were added, the *Tragedy of Tragedies* still keeps, or kept the stage. But its crowning glory is its traditional connection with Swift, who told Mrs. Pilkington that he "had not laugh'd above twice" in his life, once at the tricks of a merry-andrew, and again when (in Fielding's burlesque) Tom Thumb killed the ghost. This is an incident of the earlier versions, omitted in deference to the critics, for which the reader will seek vainly in the play as now printed; and he will, moreover, discover that Mrs. Pilkington's memory served her imperfectly, since it is not Tom Thumb who kills the ghost, but the ghost of Tom Thumb which is killed by his jealous rival, Lord Grizzle. A trifling inaccuracy of this sort, however, is rather in favour of the truth of the story than against it, for a pure fiction would in all probability have been more precise. Another point of interest in connection with this burlesque is the frontispiece which Hogarth supplied to the edition of 1731. It has no special value as a design, but it constitutes the earliest reference to that friendship with the painter, of which so many traces are to be found in Fielding's works.

Hitherto Fielding had succeeded best in burlesque. But, in 1732, the same year in which he produced the *Modern Husband*, the *Debauchees*, and the *Covent Garden Tragedy*, he made an adaptation of Molière's *Médecin malgré lui*, which had already been imitated in English by Mrs. Centlivre and others. This little piece, to which he gave the title of the *Mock-Doctor*; or, *The Dumb Lady*

*cur'd*, was well received. The French original was rendered with tolerable closeness; but here and there Fielding has introduced little touches of his own, as, for instance, where Gregory (Sganarelle) tells his wife Dorcas (Martine), whom he has just been beating, that as they are but one, whenever he beats her he beats half of himself. To this she replies by requesting that for the future he will beat the other half. An entire scene (the thirteenth) was also added at the desire of Miss Raftor, who played Dorcas, and thought her part too short. This is apparently intended as a burlesque of the notorious quack Misaubin, to whom the *Mock-Doctor* was ironically dedicated. He was the proprietor of a famous pill, and was introduced by Hogarth into the *Harlot's Progress*. Gregory was played by Theophilus Cibber, and the preface contains a complimentary reference to his acting, and the expected retirement of his father from the stage. Neither Genest nor Lawrence gives the date when the piece was first produced, but if the "April" on the dubious author's benefit ticket attributed to Hogarth be correct, it must have been in the first months of 1732.

The cordial reception of the *Mock-Doctor* seems to have encouraged Fielding to make further levies upon Molière, and he speaks of his hope to do so in the "Preface." As a matter of fact, he produced a version of *L'Avare* at Drury Lane in the following year, which entirely outshone the older versions of Shadwell and Ozell, and gained from Voltaire the praise of having added to the original "*quelques beautés de dialogue particulières à sa* (Fielding's) *nation*." Lovegold, its leading rôle, became a stock part. It was well played by its first actor Griffin,

and was a favourite exercise with Macklin, Shuter, and (in our own days) Phelps.

In February 1733, when the *Miser* was first acted, Fielding was five and twenty. His means at this time were, in all probability, exceedingly uncertain. The small proportion of money due to him at his mother's death had doubtless been long since exhausted, and he must have been almost wholly dependent upon the precarious profits of his pen. That he was assisted by rich and noble friends to any material extent appears, in spite of Murphy, to be unlikely. At all events, an occasional dedication to the Duke of Richmond or the Earl of Chesterfield cannot be regarded as proof positive. Lyttelton, who certainly befriended him in later life, was for a great part of this period absent on the Grand Tour, and Ralph Allen had not yet come forward. In default of the always deferred allowance, his father's house at Salisbury (?) was no doubt open to him; and it is plain, from indications in his minor poems, that he occasionally escaped into the country. But in London he lived for the most part, and probably not very worshipfully. What, even now, would be the life of a young man of Fielding's age, fond of pleasure, careless of the future, very liberally equipped with high spirits, and straightway exposed to the perilous seductions of the stage? Fielding had the defects of his qualities, and was no better than the rest of those about him. He was manly, and frank, and generous; but these characteristics could scarcely protect him from the terrors of the tip-staff, and the sequels of "t'other bottle." Indeed, he very honestly and unfeignedly confesses to the lapses of his youth in the *Journey from this World to the Next*, adding

that he pretended "to very little Virtue more than general Philanthropy and private Friendship." It is therefore but reasonable to infer that his daily life must have been more than usually characterised by the vicissitudes of the eighteenth-century prodigal,—alternations from the "Rose" to a Clare-Market ordinary, from gold-lace to fustian, from champagne to "British Burgundy." In a rhymed petition to Walpole, dated 1730, he makes pleasant mirth of what no doubt was sometimes sober truth—his debts, his duns, and his dinnerless condition. He (the verses tell us)

"—— from his Garret can look down  
On the whole Street of *Arlington*."<sup>1</sup>

Again—

"The Family that dines the latest  
Is in our Street esteem'd the greatest ;  
But latest Hours must surely fall  
Before him who ne'er dines at all ;"

and

"This too doth in my Favour speak,  
Your Levée is but twice a Week ;  
From mine I can exclude but one Day,  
My Door is quiet on a *Sunday*."

When he can admit so much even jestingly of himself, it is but legitimate to presume that there is no great exaggeration in the portrait of him in 1735, by the anonymous satirist of *Seasonable Reproof* :—

"F—— g, who yesterday appear'd so rough,  
Clad in coarse *Prize*, and plaister'd down with *Snuff*,  
See how his *Instant* gaudy Trappings shine ;  
What *Play-house* Bard was ever seen so fine !  
But this, not from his *Humour* flows, you'll say,

---

<sup>1</sup> Where Sir Robert lived.



But mere *Necessity* ;—for last Night lay  
In *Pawn*, the *Velvet* which he wears to Day."

His work bears traces of the inequalities and irregularities of his mode of living. Although in certain cases (e.g. the revised edition of *Tom Thumb*) the artist and scholar seems to have spasmodically asserted himself, the majority of his plays were hasty and ill-considered performances, most of which (as Lady Mary said) he would have thrown into the fire "if meat could have been got without money, and money without scribbling." "When he had contracted to bring on a play, or a farce," says Murphy, "it is well known, by many of his friends now living, that he would go home rather late from a tavern, and would, the next morning, deliver a scene to the players, written upon the papers which had wrapped the tobacco, in which he so much delighted." It is not easy to conceive, unless Fielding's capacities as a smoker were unusual, that any large contribution to dramatic literature could have been made upon the wrappings of Virginia or Freeman's Best; but that his reputation for careless production was established among his contemporaries is manifest from the following passage in a burlesque *Author's Will* published in the *Universal Spectator* of Oldys :—

"Item, I give and bequeath to my very negligent Friend *Henry Drama*, Esq., all my INDUSTRY. And whereas the World may think this an unnecessary Legacy, forasmuch as the said *Henry Drama*, Esq., brings on the Stage four *Pieces* every Season; yet as such *Pieces* are always wrote with uncommon *Rapidity*, and during such fatal Intervals only as the *Stocks* have been on the *Fall*, this Legacy will be of use to him to revise and correct his Works. Furthermore, for fear the said *Henry Drama* should make an ill Use of the



said *Industry*, and expend it all on a *Ballad Farce*, it's my Will the said Legacy should be paid him by equal Portions, and as his Necessities may require."

There can be little doubt that the above quotation, which is reprinted in the *Gentleman's* for July 1734, and seems to have hitherto escaped inquiry, refers to none other than the "very negligent" Author of the *Modern Husband* and the *Old Debauchees*—in other words, to Henry Fielding.

## CHAPTER II.

### MORE PLAYS—MARRIAGE—THE LICENSING ACT.

THE very subordinate part in the *Miser* of "Furnish, an Upholsterer," was taken by a third-rate actor, whose surname has been productive of no little misconception among Henry Fielding's biographers. This was Timothy Fielding, sometime member of the Haymarket and Drury Lane companies, and proprietor, for several successive years, of a booth at Bartholomew, Southwark, and other fairs. In the absence of any Christian name, Mr. Lawrence seems to have rather rashly concluded that the Fielding mentioned by Genest as having a booth at Bartholomew Fair in 1733 with Hippisley (the original Peachum of the *Beggar's Opera*), was Fielding the dramatist; and the mistake thus originated at once began that prosperous course which usually awaits any slip of the kind. It misled one notoriously careful inquirer, who, in his interesting chronicles of Bartholomew Fair, minutely investigated the actor's history, giving precise details of his doings at "Bartlemy" from 1728 to 1736; but, although the theory involved obvious inconsistencies, apparently without any suspicion that the proprietor of the booth which stood, season after season, in the yard of the George Inn at Smithfield, was an

entirely different person from his greater namesake. The late Dr. Rimbault carried the story farther still, and attempted to show, in *Notes and Queries* for May 1859, that Henry Fielding had a booth at Tottenham Court in 1738, "subsequent to his admission into the Middle Temple;" and he also promised to supply additional particulars to the effect that even 1738 was not the "*last* year of Fielding's career as a booth-proprietor." At this stage (probably for good reasons) inquiry seems to have slumbered, although, with the fatal vitality of error, the statement continued (and still continues) to be repeated in various quarters. In 1875, however, Mr. Frederick Latreille published a short article in *Notes and Queries*, proving conclusively, by extracts from contemporary newspapers and other sources, that the Timothy Fielding above referred to was the real Fielding of the fairs; that he became landlord of the Buffalo Tavern "at the corner of Bloomsbury Square" in 1733; and that he died in August 1738, his christian name, so often suppressed, being duly recorded in the register of the neighbouring church of St. George's, where he was buried. The admirers of our great novelist owe Mr. Latreille a debt of gratitude for this opportune discovery. It is true that a certain element of Bohemian picturesqueness is lost to Henry Fielding's life, already not very rich in recorded incident; and it would certainly have been curious if he, who ended his days in trying to dignify the judicial office, should have begun life by acting the part of a "trading justice," namely that of Quorum in Coffey's *Beggar's Wedding*, which Timothy Fielding had played at Drury Lane. But, on the whole, it is satisfactory to know that his early experiences did not,

of necessity, include those of a strolling player. Some obscure and temporary connection with Bartholomew Fair he may have had, as Smollett, in the scurrilous pamphlet issued in 1742, makes him say that he blew a trumpet there in quality of herald to a collection of wild beasts; but this is probably no more than an earlier and uglier form of the apparition laid by Mr. Latreille. The only positive evidence of any connection between Henry Fielding and the Smithfield carnival is, that Theophilus Cibber's company played the *Miser* at their booth in August 1733.

With the exception of the *Miser* and an afterpiece, never printed, entitled *Deborah; or, A Wife for you all*, which was acted for Miss Raftor's benefit in April 1733, nothing important was brought upon the stage by Fielding until January of the following year, when he produced the *Intriguing Chambermaid*, and a revised version of the *Author's Farce*. By a succession of changes, which it is impossible here to describe in detail, considerable alterations had taken place in the management of Drury Lane. In the first place, Wilks was dead, and his share in the Patent was represented by his widow. Booth also was dead, and Mrs. Booth had sold her share to Giffard of Goodman's Fields, while the elder Cibber had retired. At the beginning of the season of 1733-34 the leading patentee was an amateur called Highmore, who had purchased Cibber's share. He had also purchased part of Booth's share before his death in May 1733. The only other shareholder of importance was Mrs. Wilks. Shortly after the opening of the theatre in September, the greater part of the Drury Lane Company, led by the younger Cibber, revolted



from Highmore and Mrs. Wilks, and set up for themselves. Matters were farther complicated by the fact that John Rich had not long opened a new theatre in Covent Garden, which constituted a fresh attraction; and that what Fielding called the "wanton affected Fondness for foreign Musick," was making the Italian opera a dangerous rival—the more so as it was patronised by the nobility. Without actors, the patentees were in serious case. Miss Raftor, who about this time became Mrs. Clive, appears, however, to have remained faithful to them, as also did Henry Fielding. The lively little comedy of the *Intriguing Chambermaid* was adapted from Regnard especially for her; and in its published form was preceded by an epistle in which the dramatist dwells upon the "Factions and Divisions among the Players," and compliments her upon her compassionate adherence to Mr. Highmore and Mrs. Wilks in their time of need. The epistle is also valuable for its warm and generous testimony to the private character of this accomplished actress, whose part in real life, says Fielding, was that of "the best Wife, the best Daughter, the best Sister, and the best Friend." The words are more than mere compliment; they appear to have been true. Madcap and humourist as she was, no breath of slander seems ever to have tarnished the reputation of Kitty Clive, whom Johnson—a fine judge, when his prejudices were not actively aroused—called in addition "the best player that he ever saw."

The *Intriguing Chambermaid* was produced on the 15th of January 1734. Lettice, from whom the piece was named, was well personated by Mrs. Clive, and Colonel Bluff by Macklin, the only actor of any promise that



Highmore had been able to secure. With the new comedy the *Author's Farce* was revived. It would be unnecessary to refer to this again, but for the additions that were made to it. These consisted chiefly in the substitution of Marplay Junior for Sparkish, the actor-manager of the first version. The death of Wilks may have been a reason for this alteration; but a stronger was no doubt the desire to throw ridicule upon Theophilus Cibber, whose behaviour in deserting Drury Lane immediately after his father had sold his share to Highmore had not passed without censure, nor had his father's action escaped sarcastic comment. Theophilus Cibber—whose best part was Beaumont and Fletcher's Copper Captain, and who carried the impersonation into private life—had played in several of Fielding's pieces; but Fielding had linked his fortunes to those of the patentees, and was consequently against the players in this quarrel. The following scene was accordingly added to the farce for the exclusive benefit of "Young Marplay":—

"*Marplay junior.* Mr. *Luckless*, I kiss your Hands—Sir, I am your most obedient humble Servant; you see, Mr. *Luckless*, what Power you have over me. I attend your Commands, tho' several Persons of Quality have staid at Court for me above this Hour.

*Luckless.* I am obliged to you—I have a Tragedy for your House, Mr. *Marplay*.

*Mar. jun.* Ha! if you will send it me, I will give you my Opinion of it; and if I can make any Alterations in it that will be for its Advantage, I will do it freely.

*Witmore.* Alterations, Sir?

*Mar. jun.* Yes, Sir, Alterations—I will maintain it, let a Play be never so good, without Alteration it will do nothing.

*Wit.* Very odd indeed.

*Mar. jun.* Did you ever write, Sir?

*Wit.* No, Sir, I thank Heav'n.

*Mar. jun.* Oh! your humble Servant—your very humble Servant, Sir. When you write yourself you will find the Necessity of Alterations. Why, Sir, wou'd you guess that I had alter'd *Shakespear*?

*Wit.* Yes, faith, Sir, no one sooner.

*Mar. jun.* Alack-a-day! Was you to see the Plays when they are brought to us—a Parcel of crude, undigested Stuff. We are the Persons, Sir, who lick them into Form, that mould them into Shape—The Poet make the Play indeed! The Colour-man might be as well said to make the Picture, or the Weaver the Coat: My Father and I, Sir, are a Couple of poetical Tailors; when a Play is brought us, we consider it as a Tailor does his Coat, we cut it, Sir, we cut it: And let me tell you, we have the exact Measure of the Town, we know how to fit their Taste. The Poets, between you and me, are a Pack of ignorant—

*Wit.* Hold, hold, sir. This is not quite so civil to Mr. *Luckless*: Besides, as I take it, you have done the Town the Honour of writing yourself.

*Mar. jun.* Sir, you are a Man of Sense; and express yourself well. I did, as you say, once make a small Sally into *Parnassus*, took a sort of flying Leap over *Helicon*: But if ever they catch me there again—Sir, the Town have a Prejudice to my Family; for if any Play cou'd have made them ashamed to damn it, mine must. It was all over Plot. It wou'd have made half a dozen Novels: Nor was it cram'd with a pack of Wit-traps, like *Congreve* and *Wycherly*, where every one knows when the Joke was coming. I defy the sharpest Critick of 'em all to know when any Jokes of mine were coming. The Dialogue was plain, easy, and natural, and not one single Joke in it from the Beginning to the End: Besides, Sir, there was one Scene of tender melancholy Conversation, enough to have melted a Heart of Stone; and yet they damn'd it: And they damn'd themselves; for they shall have no more of mine.

*Wit.* Take pity on the Town, Sir.

*Mar. jun.* I! No, Sir, no. I'll write no more. No more; unless I am forc'd to it.

*Luckless.* That's no easy thing, *Marplay*.

*Mar. jun.* Yes, Sir. Odes, Odes, a Man may be oblig'd to write those you know."

These concluding lines plainly refer to the elder Cibber's appointment as Laureate in 1730, and to those "annual Birth-day Strains," with which he so long delighted the irreverent; while the alteration of Shakespeare and the cobbling of plays generally, satirised again in a later scene, are strictly in accordance with contemporary accounts of the manners and customs of the two dictators of Drury Lane. The piece indicated by Marplay Junior was probably Theophilus Cibber's *Lover*, which had been produced in January 1731 with very moderate success.

After the *Intriguing Chambermaid* and the revived *Author's Farce*, Fielding seems to have made farther exertions for "the distressed Actors in Drury Lane." He had always been an admirer of Cervantes, frequent references to whose master-work are to be found scattered through his plays; and he now busied himself with completing and expanding the loose scenes of the comedy of *Don Quixote in England*, which (as before stated) he had sketched at Leyden for his own diversion. He had already thought of bringing it upon the stage, but had been dissuaded from doing so by Cibber and Booth, who regarded it as wanting in novelty. Now, however, he strengthened it by the addition of some election scenes, in which—he tells Lord Chesterfield in the dedication—he designed to give a lively representation of "the Calamities brought on a Country by general Corruption;" and it was duly rehearsed. But unexpected delays took place in its production;

the revolted players returned to Drury Lane; and, lest the actors' benefits should further retard its appearance by postponing it until the winter season, Fielding transferred it to the Haymarket, where, according to Geneste, it was acted in April 1734. As a play, *Don Quixote in England* has few stage qualities and no plot to speak of. But the Don with his whimsies, and Sancho with his appetite and string of proverbs, are conceived in something of the spirit of Cervantes. Squire Badger, too, a rudimentary Squire Western, well represented by Macklin, is vigorously drawn; and the song of his huntsman Scut, beginning with the fine line "The dusky Night rides down the Sky," has a verse that recalls a practice of which Addison accuses Sir Roger de Coverley:—

*"A brushing Fox in yonder Wood,  
Secure to find we seek;  
For why, I carry'd sound and good,  
A Cartload there last Week.  
And a Hunting we will go."*

The election scenes, though but slightly attached to the main story, are keenly satirical, and considering that Hogarth's famous series of kindred prints belongs to a much later date, must certainly have been novel, as may be gathered from the following little colloquy between Mr. Mayor and Messrs. Guzzle and Retail:—

*"Mayor (to Retail). . . . I like an Opposition, because otherwise a Man may be oblig'd to vote against his Party; therefore when we invite a Gentleman to stand, we invite him to spend his Money for the Honour of his Party; and when both Parties have spent as much as they are able, every honest Man will vote according to his Conscience."*

*Guz.* Mr. Mayor talks like a Man of Sense and Honour, and it does me good to hear him.

*May.* Ay, ay, Mr. *Guzzle*, I never gave a Vote contrary to my Conscience. I have very earnestly recommended the Country-Interest to all my Brethren: But before that, I recommended the Town-Interest, that is, the interest of this Corporation; and first of all I recommended to every particular Man to take a particular Care of himself. And it is with a certain way of Reasoning, That he who serves me best, will serve the Town best; and he that serves the Town best, will serve the Country best."

In the January and February of 1735 Fielding produced two more pieces at Drury Lane, a farce and a five-act comedy. The farce—a lively trifle enough—was *An Old Man taught Wisdom*, a title subsequently changed to the *Virgin Unmasked*. It was obviously written to display the talents of Mrs. Clive, who played in it her favourite character of a hoyden, and, after "interviewing" a number of suitors chosen by her father, finally ran away with Thomas the footman—a course in those days not without its parallel in high life, above stairs as well as below. It appears to have succeeded, though Bookish, one of the characters, was entirely withdrawn in deference to some disapprobation on the part of the audience; while the part of Wormwood, a lawyer, which is found in the latest editions, is said to have been "omitted in representation." The comedy, entitled *The Universal Gallant; or, The different Husbands*, was scarcely so fortunate. Notwithstanding that Quin, who, after an absence of many years, had returned to Drury Lane, played a leading part, and that Theophilus Cibber in the hero, Captain Smart, seems to have been fitted with a character exactly suited to his talents and idiosyncrasy,



the play ran no more than three nights. Till the third act was almost over, "the *Audience*," says the *Prompter* (as quoted by "Sylvanus Urban"), "sat quiet, in hopes it would mend, till finding it grew *worse and worse*, they lost all Patience, and not an *Expression* or *Sentiment* afterwards pass'd without its deserved *Censure*." Perhaps it is not to be wondered at that the author—"the prolifick *Mr. Fielding*," as the *Prompter* calls him, attributed its condemnation to causes other than its lack of interest. In his *Advertisement* he openly complains of the "cruel Usage" his "poor Play" had met with, and of the barbarity of the young men about town who made "a Jest of damning Plays"—a pastime which, whether it prevailed in this case or not, no doubt existed, as Sarah Fielding afterwards refers to it in *David Simple*. If an author—he goes on to say—"be so unfortunate [*as*] to depend on the success of his Labours for his Bread, he must be an inhuman Creature indeed, who would out of sport and wantonness prevent a Man from getting a Livelihood in an honest and inoffensive Way, and make a jest of starving him and his Family." The plea is a good one if the play is good; but if not, it is worthless. In this respect the public are like the French Cardinal in the story; and when the famished writer's work fails to entertain them, they are fully justified in doubting his *raison d'être*. There is no reason for supposing that the *Universal Gallant* deserved a better fate than it met with.

Judging from the time which elapsed between the production of this play and that of *Pasquin* (Fielding's next theatrical venture), it has been conjectured that the interval was occupied by his marriage, and brief experience as a Dorsetshire country gentleman. The exact

date of his marriage is not known, though it is generally assumed to have taken place in the beginning of 1735. But it may well have been earlier, for it will be observed that in the above quotation from the Preface to the *Universal Gallant*, which is dated from "Buckingham Street, Feb. 12," he indirectly speaks of "his family." This, it is true, may be no more than the pious fraud of a bachelor; but if it be taken literally, we must conclude that his marriage was already so far a thing of the past that he was already a father. This supposition would account for the absence of any record of the birth of a child during his forthcoming residence at East Stour, by the explanation that it had already happened in London; and it is not impossible that the entry of the marriage, too, may be hidden away in some obscure Metropolitan parish register, since those of Salisbury have been fruitlessly searched. At this distance of time, however, speculation is fruitless; and, in default of more definite information, the "spring of 1735," which Keightley gives, must be accepted as the probable date of the marriage.

Concerning the lady, the particulars are more precise. She was a Miss Charlotte Cradock, one of three sisters living upon their own means at Salisbury, or—as it was then styled—New Sarum. Mr. Keightley's personal inquiries, *circa* 1858, elicited the information that the family, now extinct, was highly respectable, but not of New Sarum's best society. Richardson, in one of his malevolent outbursts, asserted that the sisters were illegitimate; but, says the writer above referred to, "of this circumstance we have no other proof, and I am able to add that the tradition of Salisbury knows nothing of it."

They were, however, celebrated for their personal attractions ; and if the picture given in chap. ii. book iv. of *Tom Jones* accurately represents the first Mrs. Fielding, she must have been a most charming brunette. Something of the stereotyped characteristics of a novelist's heroine obviously enter into the description ; but the luxuriant black hair, which, cut "to comply with the modern Fashion," "curled so gracefully in her Neck," the lustrous eyes, the dimple in the right cheek, the chin rather full than small, and the complexion having "more of the Lilly than of the Rose," but flushing with exercise or modesty, are, doubtless, accurately set down. In speaking of the nose as "exactly regular," Fielding appears to have deviated slightly from the truth ; for we learn from Lady Louisa Stuart that, in this respect, Miss Cradock's appearance had "suffered a little" from an accident mentioned in book ii. of *Amelia*, the overturning of a chaise. Whether she also possessed the mental qualities and accomplishments which fell to the lot of Sophia Western, we have no means of determining ; but Lady Stuart is again our authority for saying that she was as amiable as she was handsome.

From the love-poems in the first volume of the *Miscellanies* of 1743—poems which their author declares to have been "Productions of the Heart rather than of the Head"—it is clear that Fielding had been attached to his future wife for several years previous to 1735. One of them, *Advice to the Nymphs of New S—m*, celebrates the charms of Celia—the poetical equivalent for Charlotte—as early as 1730 ; another, containing a reference to the player Anthony Boheme, who died in 1731, was probably written at the same time ; while a

third, in which, upon the special intervention of Jove himself, the prize of beauty is decreed by Venus to the Salisbury sisters, may be of an earlier date than any. The year 1730 was the year of his third piece, the *Author's Farce*, and he must therefore have been paying his addresses to Miss Cradock not very long after his arrival in London. This is a fact to be borne in mind. So early an attachment to a good and beautiful girl, living no farther off than Salisbury, where his own father probably resided, is scarcely consistent with the reckless dissipation which has been laid to his charge, although, on his own showing, he was by no means faultless. But it is a part of natures like his to exaggerate their errors in the moment of repentance; and it may well be that Henry Fielding, too, was not so black as he painted himself. Of his love-verses he says—"this Branch of Writing is what I very little pretend to;" and it would be misleading to rate them highly, for, unlike his literary descendant, Mr. Thackeray, he never attained to any special quality of note. But some of his octosyllabics, if they cannot be called equal to Prior's, fall little below Swift's. "I hate"—cries he in one of the pieces,

"I hate the Town, and all its Ways;  
 Ridotto's, Opera's, and Plays;  
 The Ball, the Ring, the Mall, the Court;  
 Wherever the Beau-Monde resort . . .  
 All Coffee-Houses, and their Praters;  
 All Courts of Justice, and Debaters;  
 All Taverns, and the Sots within 'em;  
 All Bubbles, and the Rogues that skin 'em,"

—and so forth, the natural anti-climax being that he loves nothing but his "Charmer" at Salisbury. In an-

other, which is headed *To Celia*.—Occasioned by her apprehending her House would be broke open, and having an old Fellow to guard it, who sat up all Night, with a Gun without any Ammunition, and from which it has been concluded that the Miss Cradocks were their own landlords, Venus chides Cupid for neglecting to guard her favourite:—

“ ‘Come tell me, Urchin, tell no lies ;  
Where was you hid, in *Vince's* eyes ?  
Did you fair *Bennet's* Breast importune ?  
(I know you dearly love a Fortune.)’  
Poor *Cupid* now began to whine ;  
‘Mamma, it was no Fault of mine.  
I in a Dimple lay *perdue*,  
That little Guard-Room chose by you.  
A hundred Loves (all arm'd) did grace  
The Beauties of her Neck and Face ;  
Thence, by a Sigh I dispossess,  
Was blown to *Harry Fielding's* Breast ;  
Where I was forc'd all Night to stay,  
Because I could not find my Way.  
But did Mamma know there what Work  
I've made, how acted like a Turk ;  
What Pains, what Torment he endures,  
Which no Physician ever cures,  
She would forgive.’ The Goddess smil'd,  
And gently chuck'd her wicked Child,  
Bid him go back, and take more Care,  
And give her Service to the Fair.”

Swift, in his *Rhapsody on Poetry*, 1733, coupled Fielding with Leonard Welsted as an instance of sinking in verse. But the foregoing, which he could not have seen, is scarcely, if at all, inferior to his own *Birthday Poems to Stella*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Swift afterwards substituted “the laureate [Cibber]” for “Fielding,” and appears to have changed his mind as to the latter's merits. “I can assure Mr. *Fielding*,” says Mrs. Pilkington in the



The history of Fielding's marriage rests so exclusively upon the statements of Arthur Murphy that it will be well to quote his words in full :—

"Mr. Fielding had not been long a writer for the stage, when he married Miss Craddock [*sic*], a beauty from Salisbury. About that time, his mother dying, a moderate estate, at Stower in Dorsetshire, devolved to him. To that place he retired with his wife, on whom he doated, with a resolution to bid adieu to all the follies and intemperances to which he had addicted himself in the career of a town-life. But unfortunately a kind of family-pride here gained an ascendant over him; and he began immediately to vie in splendour with the neighbouring country 'squires. With an estate not much above two hundred pounds a-year, and his wife's fortune, which did not exceed fifteen hundred pounds, he encumbered himself with a large retinue of servants, all clad in costly yellow liveries. For their master's honour, these people could not descend so low as to be careful in their apparel, but, in a month or two, were unfit to be seen; the 'squire's dignity required that they should be new-equipped; and his chief pleasure consisting in society and convivial mirth, hospitality threw open his doors, and, in less than three years, entertainments, hounds, and horses, entirely devoured a little patrimony, which, had it been managed with economy, might have secured to him a state of independence for the rest of his life, etc."

This passage, which has played a conspicuous part in all biographies of Fielding, was very carefully sifted by Mr. Keightley, who came to the conclusion that it was a "mere tissue of error and inconsistency."<sup>1</sup> Without going to this length, we must admit that it is manifestly

third and last volume of her *Memoirs* (1754), "the Dean had a high opinion of his Wit, which must be a Pleasure to him, as no Man was ever better qualified to judge, possessing it so eminently himself."

<sup>1</sup> Some of Mr. Keightley's criticisms were anticipated by Watson.

incorrect in many respects. If Fielding married in 1735 (though, as already pointed out, he may have married earlier, and retired to the country upon the failure of the *Universal Gallant*), he is certainly inaccurately described as "not having been long a writer for the stage," since writing for the stage had been his chief occupation for seven years. Then again his mother had died as far back as April 10, 1718, when he was a boy of eleven; and if he had inherited anything from her, he had probably been in the enjoyment of it ever since he came of age. Furthermore, the statement as to "three years" is at variance with the fact that, according to the dedication to the *Universal Gallant*, he was still in London in February 1735, and was back again managing the Haymarket in the first months of 1736. Murphy, however, may only mean that the "estate" at East Stour was in his possession for three years. Mr. Keightley's other points—namely, that the "tolerably respectable farm-house," in which he is supposed to have lived, was scarcely adapted to "splendid entertainments," or "a large retinue of servants;" and that, to be in strict accordance with the family arms, the liveries should have been not "yellow," but white and blue—must be taken for what they are worth. On the whole, the probability is, that Murphy's words were only the careless repetition of local tittle-tattle, of much of which, as Captain Booth says pertinently in *Amelia*, "the only basis is lying." The squires of the neighbourhood would naturally regard the dashing young gentleman from London with the same distrustful hostility that Addison's "Tory Foxhunter" exhibited to those who differed with him in politics. It would be remembered,

besides, that the new-comer was the son of another and an earlier Fielding of less pretensions, and no real cordiality could ever have existed between them. Indeed, it may be assumed that this was the case, for Booth's account of the opposition and ridicule which he—"a poor renter!"—encountered when he enlarged his farm and set up his coach has a distinct personal accent. That he was lavish, and lived beyond his means, is quite in accordance with his character. The man who, as a Bow Street magistrate, kept open house on a pittance, was not likely to be less lavish as a country gentleman, with £1500 in his pocket, and newly married to a young and handsome wife. "He would have wanted money," said Lady Mary, "if his hereditary lands had been as extensive as his imagination;" and there can be little doubt that the rafters of the old farm by the Stour, with the great locust tree at the back, which is figured in Hutchins's *History of Dorset*, rang often to hunting choruses, and that not seldom the "dusky Night rode down the Sky" over the prostrate forms of Harry Fielding's guests.<sup>1</sup> But even £1500, and (in spite of Murphy) it is by no means clear that he had anything more, could scarcely last for ever. Whether his footmen wore yellow or not, a few brief months found him again in town. That he was able

<sup>1</sup> An interesting relic of the East Stour residence has recently been presented by Mr. Merthyr Guest (through Mr. R. A. Kinglake) to the Somersetshire Archaeological Society. It is an oak table of solid proportions, and bears on a brass plate the following inscription, emanating from a former owner:—"This table belonged to Henry Fielding, Esq., novelist. He hunted from East Stour Farm, 1718, and in three years dissipated his fortune keeping hounds." In 1718, it may be observed, Fielding was a boy of eleven. Probably the whole of the latter sentence is nothing more than a distortion of Murphy.

to rent a theatre may perhaps be accepted as proof that his profuse hospitalities had not completely exhausted his means.

The moment was a favourable one for a fresh theatrical experiment. The stage-world was split up into factions, the players were disorganised, and everything seemed in confusion. Whether Fielding himself conceived the idea of making capital out of this state of things, or whether it was suggested to him by some of the company who had acted *Don Quixote in England*, it is impossible to say. In the first months of 1736, however, he took the little French Theatre in the Haymarket, and opened it with a company which he christened the "Great Mogul's Company of Comedians," who were further described as "having dropped from the Clouds." The "Great Mogul" was a name sometimes given by playwrights to the elder Cibber; but there is no reason for supposing that any allusion to him was intended on this occasion. The company, with the exception of Macklin, who was playing at Drury Lane, consisted chiefly of the actors in *Don Quixote in England*; and the first piece was entitled *Pasquin: a Dramatick Satire on the Times: being the Rehearsal of Two Plays, viz. a Comedy call'd the Election, and a Tragedy call'd the Life and Death of Common-Sense*. The form of this work, which belongs to the same class as Sheridan's *Critic* and Buckingham's *Rehearsal*, was probably determined by Fielding's past experience of the public taste. His latest comedy had failed, and its predecessors had not been very successful. But his burlesques had met with a better reception, while the election episodes in *Don Quixote* had seemed to disclose a fresh field for the satire of con-

temporary manners. And in the satire of contemporary manners he felt his strength lay. The success of *Pasquin* proved he had not miscalculated, for it ran more than forty nights, drawing, if we may believe the unknown author of the life of Theophilus Cibber, numerous and enthusiastic audiences "from *Grosvenor, Cavendish, Hanover*, and all the other fashionable Squares, as also from *Pall Mall*, and the *Inns of Court*."

In regard to plot, the comedy which *Pasquin* contains scarcely deserves the name. It consists of a string of loosely-connected scenes, which depict the shameless political corruption of the Walpole era with a good deal of boldness and humour. The sole difference between the "Court party," represented by two Candidates with the Bunyan-like names of Lord Place and Colonel Promise, and the "Country party," whose nominees are Sir Harry Fox-Chace and Squire Tankard, is that the former bribe openly, the latter indirectly. The Mayor, whose sympathies are with the "Country party" is finally induced by his wife to vote for and return the other side, although they are in a minority; and the play is concluded by the precipitate marriage of his daughter with Colonel Promise. Mr. Fustian, the Tragic Author, who, with Mr. Sneerwell the Critic, is one of the spectators of the rehearsal, demurs to the abruptness with which this ingenious catastrophe is brought about, and inquires where the preliminary action, of which there is not the slightest evidence in the piece itself, has taken place. Thereupon Trapwit, the Comic Author, replies as follows, in one of those passages which show that, whatever Fielding's dramatic limitations may have been, he was at least a keen critic of stage practice:—



"*Trapwiti*. Why, behind the Scenes, Sir. What, would you have every Thing brought upon the Stage? I intend to bring ours to the Dignity of the *French* Stage; and I have *Horace's* Advice of my Side; we have many Things both said and done in our Comedies, which might be better perform'd behind the Scenes: The *French*, you know, banish all Cruelty from their Stage; and I don't see why we should bring on a Lady in ours, practising all manner of Cruelty upon her Lover: beside, Sir, we do not only produce it, but encourage it; for I could name you some Comedies, if I would, where a Woman is brought in for four Acts together, behaving to a worthy Man in a Manner for which she almost deserves to be hang'd; and in the Fifth, forsooth, she is rewarded with him for a Husband: Now, Sir, as I know this hits some Tastes, and am willing to oblige all, I have given every Lady a Latitude of thinking mine has behaved in whatever Manner she would have her."

The part of Lord Place in the *Election*, after the first few nights, was taken by Cibber's daughter, the notorious Mrs. Charlotte Charke, whose extraordinary Memoirs are among the curiosities of eighteenth-century literature, and whose experiences were as varied as those of any character in fiction. She does not seem to have acted in the *Life and Death of Common-Sense*, the rehearsal of which followed that of the *Election*. This is a burlesque of the *Tom Thumb* type, much of which is written in vigorous blank verse. Queen Common-Sense is conspired against by Firebrand, Priest of the Sun, by Law, and by Physic. Law is incensed because she has endeavoured to make his piebald jargon intelligible; Physic because she has preferred Water Gruel to all his drugs; and Firebrand because she would restrain the power of Priests. Some of the strokes must have gone home to those receptive hearers who, as one contemporary account informs us, "were dull enough

not only to think they contain'd Wit and Humour, but Truth also":—

"*Queen Common-Sense.* My Lord of *Law*, I sent for you this Morning ;

I have a strange Petition given to me ;  
Two Men, it seems, have lately been at Law  
For an Estate, which both of them have lost,  
And their Attorneys now divide between them.

*Law.* Madam, these things will happen in the Law.

*Q. C. S.* Will they, my Lord? then better we had none:  
But I have also heard a sweet Bird sing,  
That Men, unable to discharge their Debts  
At a short Warning, being sued for them,  
Have, with both Power and Will their Debts to pay  
Lain all their Lives in Prison for their Costs.

*Law.* That may perhaps be some poor Person's Case,  
Too mean to entertain your Royal Ear.

*Q. C. S.* My Lord, while I am Queen I shall not think  
One Man too mean, or poor, to be redress'd ;  
Moreover, Lord, I am inform'd your Laws  
Are grown so large, and daily yet encrease,  
That the great Age of old *Methusalem*  
Would scarce suffice to read your Statutes out."

There is also much more than merely transitory satire  
in the speech of "Firebrand" to the Queen:—

"*Firebrand.* Ha! do you doubt it? nay, if you doubt that,

I will prove nothing—But my zeal inspires me,  
And I will tell you, Madam, you yourself  
Are a most deadly Enemy to the Sun,  
And all his Priests have greatest Cause to wish  
You had been never born.

*Q. C. S.* Ha! say'st thou, Priest?  
Then know I honour and adore the Sun!  
And when I see his Light, and feel his Warmth,  
I glow with flaming Gratitude toward him ;  
But know, I never will adore a Priest,

Who wears Pride's Face beneath Religion's Mask,  
And makes a Pick-Lock of his Piety,  
To steal away the Liberty of Mankind.  
But while I live, I'll never give thee Power.

*Firebrand.* Madam, our Power is not deriv'd from you,  
Nor any one : 'Twas sent us in a Box  
From the great Sun himself, and Carriage paid;  
*Phaeton* brought it when he overturn'd  
The Chariot of the Sun into the Sea.

*Q. C. S.* Shew me the Instrument, and let me read it.

*Fireb.* Madam, you cannot read it, for being thrown  
Into the Sea, the Water has so damag'd it,  
That none but Priests could ever read it since."

In the end, Firebrand stabs Common-Sense, but her Ghost frightens Ignorance off the Stage, upon which Sneerwell says—"I am glad you make *Common-Sense* get the better at last; I was under terrible Apprehensions for your Moral." "Faith, Sir," says Fustian, "this is almost the only Play where she has got the better lately." And so the piece closes. But it would be wrong to quit it without some reference to the numberless little touches by which, throughout the whole, the humours of dramatic life behind the scenes are ironically depicted. The Comic Poet is arrested on his way from "*King's Coffee-House*," and the claim being "for upwards of Four Pound," it is at first supposed that "he will hardly get Bail." He is subsequently inquired after by a Gentlewoman in a Riding-Hood, whom he passes off as a Lady of Quality, but who, in reality, is bringing him a clean shirt. There are difficulties with one of the Ghosts, who has a "Church-yard Cough," and "is so Lame he can hardly walk the Stage;" while another comes to rehearsal without being properly floured, because the stage barber has gone to Drury Lane "to shave the

Sultan in the New Entertainment." On the other hand, the Ghost of Queen Common-Sense appears before she is killed, and is with some difficulty persuaded that her action is premature. Part of "the Mob" play truant to see a show in the park; Law, straying without the play-house passage is snapped up by a Lord Chief-Justice's Warrant; and a Jew carries off one of the Maids of Honour. These little incidents, together with the unblushing realism of the Pots of Porter that are made to do duty for wine, and the extra two-pennyworth of Lightning that is ordered against the first night, are all in the spirit of that inimitable picture of the *Strolling Actresses dressing in a Barn*, which Hogarth gave to the world two years later, and which, very possibly, may have borrowed some of its inspiration from Fielding's "dramatic satire."

There is every reason to suppose that the profits of *Pasquin* were far greater than those of any of its author's previous efforts. In a rare contemporary caricature, preserved in the British Museum,<sup>1</sup> the "Queen of Common-Sense" is shown presenting "Henry Fielding, Esq.," with a well-filled purse, while to "Harlequin" (John Rich of Covent Garden) she extends a halter; and in some doggerel lines underneath, reference is made to the "show'rs of Gold" resulting from the piece. This, of course, might be no more than a poetical fiction; but Fielding himself attests the pecuniary success of *Pasquin* in the Dedication to *Tumble-Down Dick*, and Mrs. Charke's statement in her Memoirs that her salary for acting the small part of Lord Place was four guineas a week, "with an Indulgence in Point of

<sup>1</sup> Political and Personal Satires, No. 2287.

Charges at her Benefit" by which she cleared sixty guineas, certainly points to a prosperous exchequer. Fielding's own benefit, as appears from the curious ticket attributed to Hogarth and facsimiled by A. M. Ireland, took place on April 25, but we have no record of the amount of his gains. Mrs. Charke farther says that "soon after *Pasquin* began to droop," Fielding produced Lillo's *Fatal Curiosity* in which she acted Agnes. This tragedy, founded on a Cornish story, is one of remarkable power and passion; but upon its first appearance it made little impression, although in the succeeding year it was acted to greater advantage in combination with another satirical medley by Fielding, the *Historical Register for the Year 1736*.

Like most sequels, the *Historical Register* had neither the vogue nor the wit of its predecessor. It was only half as long, and it was even more disconnected in character. "Harmonious Cibber," as Swift calls him, whose "preposterous Odes" had already been ridiculed in *Pasquin* and the *Author's Farce*, was once more brought on the stage as Ground-Ivy, for his alterations of Shakespeare; and under the name of Pistol, Theophilus Cibber is made to refer to the contention between his second wife, Arne's sister, and Mrs. Clive, for the honour of playing "Polly" in the *Beggar's Opera*, a play-house feud which at the latter end of 1736 had engaged "the Town" almost as seriously as the earlier rivalry of Faustina and Cuzzoni. This continued raillery of the Cibbers is, as Fielding himself seems to have felt, a "Jest a little over-acted;" but there is one scene in the piece of undeniable freshness and humour, to wit, that in which Cock, the famous salesman of the Piazzas—the George Robins of



his day—is brought on the stage as Mr. Auctioneer Hen (a part taken by Mrs. Charke). His wares, “collected by the indefatigable Pains of that celebrated Virtuoso, *Peter Humdrum, Esq.,*” include such desirable items as “curious Remnants of Political Honesty,” “delicate Pieces of Patriotism,” Modesty (which does not obtain a bid), Courage, Wit, and “a very neat clear Conscience” of great capacity, “which has been worn by a Judge, and a Bishop.” The “Cardinal Virtues” are then put up, and eighteen-pence is bid for them. But after they have been knocked down at this extravagant sum, the buyer complains that he had understood the auctioneer to say “a Cardinal’s Virtues,” and that the lot he has purchased includes “Temperance and Chastity, and a Pack of Stuff that he would not give three Farthings for.” The whole of this scene is “admirable fooling;” and it was afterwards impudently stolen by Theophilus Cibber for his farce of the *Auction*. The *Historical Register* concludes with a dialogue between Quidam, in whom the audience recognised Sir Robert Walpole, and four patriots, to whom he gives a purse which has an instantaneous effect upon their opinions. All five then go off dancing to Quidam’s fiddle; and it is explained that they have holes in their pockets through which the money will fall as they dance, enabling the donor to pick it all up again, “and so not lose one Half-penny by his Generosity.”

The frank effrontery of satire like the foregoing had by this time begun to attract the attention of the Ministry, whose withers had already been sharply wrung by *Pasquin*; and it has been conjectured that the ballet of Quidam and the Patriots played no small part in precipitating the famous “Licensing Act,” which was

passed a few weeks afterwards. Like the marriage which succeeded the funeral of Hamlet's father, it certainly "followed hard upon." But the reformation of the stage had already been contemplated by the Legislature; and two years before, Sir John Barnard had brought in a bill "to restrain the number of houses for playing of Interludes, and for the better regulating of common Players of Interludes." This, however, had been abandoned, because it was proposed to add a clause enlarging the power of the Lord Chamberlain in licensing plays, an addition to which the introducer of the measure made strong objection. He thought the power of the Lord Chamberlain already too great, and in support of his argument he instanced its wanton exercise in the case of Gay's *Polly*, the representation of which had been suddenly prohibited a few years earlier. But *Pasquin* and the *Register* brought the question of dramatic lawlessness again to the front, and a bill was hurriedly drawn, one effect of which was to revive the very provision that Sir John Barnard had opposed. The history of this affair is exceedingly obscure, and in all probability it has never been completely revealed. The received or authorised version is to be found in Coxe's *Life of Walpole*. After dwelling on the offence given to the Government by *Pasquin*, the writer goes on to say that Giffard, the manager of Goodman's Fields, brought Walpole a farce called *The Golden Rump*, which had been proposed for exhibition. Whether he did this to extort money, or to ask advice, is not clear. In either case, Walpole is said to have "paid the profits which might have accrued from the performance, and detained the copy." He then made a compendious selection of the

treasonable and profane passages it contained. These he submitted to independent members of both parties, and afterwards read them in the House itself. The result was that by way of amendment to the "Vagrant Act" of Anne's reign, a bill was prepared limiting the number of theatres, and compelling all dramatic writers to obtain a license from the Lord Chamberlain. Such is Coxe's account; but notwithstanding its circumstantial character, it has been insinuated in the sham memoirs of the younger Cibber, and it is plainly asserted in the *Rambler's Magazine* for 1787, that certain preliminary details have been conveniently suppressed. It is alleged that Walpole himself caused the farce in question to be written, and to be offered to Giffard, for the purpose of introducing his scheme of reform; and the suggestion is not without a certain remote plausibility. As may be guessed, however, *The Golden Rump* cannot be appealed to. It was never printed, although its title is identical with that of a caricature published in March 1737, and fully described in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for that month. If the play at all resembled the design, it must have been obscene and scurrilous in the extreme.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the new bill, to which it had given rise, passed rapidly through both Houses. Report speaks of animated discussions and warm opposition. But there are no traces of any divisions, or petitions against it,

<sup>1</sup> Horace Walpole, in his *Memoires of the Last Ten Years of the Reign of George II.*, says (vol. i. p. 12), "I have in my possession the imperfect copy of this piece as I found it among my father's papers after his death." He calls it Fielding's; but no importance can be attached to the statement. There is a copy of the caricature in the British Museum Print Room (Political and Personal Satires, No. 2327).

and the only speech which has survived is the very elaborate and careful oration delivered in the Upper House by Lord Chesterfield. The "second Cicero"—as Sylvanus Urban styles him—opposed the bill upon the ground that it would affect the liberty of the press; and that it was practically a tax upon the chief property of men of letters, their wit—a "precarious dependence"—which (he thanked God) my Lords were not obliged to rely upon. He dwelt also upon the value of the stage as a fearless censor of vice and folly; and he quoted with excellent effect but doubtful accuracy the famous answer of the Prince of Conti [Condé] to Molière [Louis XIV.] when *Tartuffe* was interdicted at the instance of M. de Lamoignon:—"It is true, Molière, Harlequin ridicules Heaven, and exposes religion; but you have done much worse—you have ridiculed the first minister of religion." This, although not directly advanced for the purpose, really indicated the head and front of Fielding's offending in *Pasquin* and the *Historical Register*, and although in Lord Chesterfield's speech the former is ironically condemned, it may well be that Fielding, whose *Don Quixote* had been dedicated to his Lordship, was the wire-puller in this case, and supplied this very illustration. At all events it is entirely in the spirit of Firebrand's words in *Pasquin*.—

"Speak boldly; by the Powers I serve, I swear  
You speak in Safety, even tho' you speak  
Against the Gods, provided that you speak  
Not against Priests."

But the feeling of Parliament in favour of drastic legislation was even stronger than the persuasive periods



of Chesterfield, and on the 21st of June 1737 the bill received the royal assent.

With its passing Fielding's career as a dramatic author practically closed. In his dedication of the *Historical Register* to "the Publick," he had spoken of his desire to beautify and enlarge his little theatre, and to procure a better company of actors; and he had added—"If Nature hath given me any Talents at ridiculing Vice and Imposture, I shall not be indolent, nor afraid of exerting them, while the Liberty of the Press and Stage subsists, that is to say, while we have any Liberty left among us." To all these projects the "Licensing Act" effectively put an end; and the only other plays from his pen which were produced subsequently to this date were the "Wedding Day," 1743, and the posthumous *Good-Natured Man*, 1779, both of which, as is plain from the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, were among his earliest attempts. In the little farce of *Miss Lucy in Town*, 1742, he had, he says, but "a very small Share." Besides these, there are three hasty and flimsy pieces which belong to the early part of 1737. The first of these, *Tumble-Down Dick*; or, *Phaeton in the Suds*, was a dramatic sketch in ridicule of the unmeaning Entertainments and Harlequinades of John Rich at Covent Garden. This was ironically dedicated to Rich, under his stage name of "John Lun," and from the dedication it appears that Rich had brought out an unsuccessful satire on *Pasquin* called *Marforio*. The other two were *Eurydice*, a profane and pointless farce, afterwards printed by its author (in anticipation of Beaumarchais) "as it was d—nned at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane;" and a few detached scenes in which, under the



title of *Eurydice Hiss'd ; or, a Word to the Wise*, its untoward fate was attributed to the "frail Promise of uncertain Friends." But even in these careless and half-considered productions there are happy strokes ; and one scarcely looks to find such nervous and sensible lines in a mere *à propos* as these from *Eurydice Hiss'd* :—

"Yet grant it shou'd succeed, grant that by Chance,  
Or by the Whim and Madness of the Town,  
A Farce without Contrivance, without Sense  
Should run to the Astonishment of Mankind ;  
Think how you will be read in After-times,  
When Friends are not, and the impartial Judge  
Shall with the meanest Scribbler rank your Name ;  
Who would not rather wish a *Butler's* fame,  
Distress'd, and poor in every thing but Merit,  
Than be the blundering Laureat to a Court ?"

Self-accusatory passages such as this—and there are others like it—indicate a higher ideal of dramatic writing than Fielding is held to have attained, and probably the key to them is to be found in that reaction of better judgment which seems invariably to have followed his most reckless efforts. It was a part of his sanguine and impulsive nature to be as easily persuaded that his work was worthless as that it was excellent. "When," says Murphy, "he was not under the immediate urgency of want, they, who were intimate with him, are ready to aver that he had a mind greatly superior to anything mean or little ; when his finances were exhausted, he was not the most elegant in his choice of the means to redress himself, and he would instantly exhibit a farce or a puppet-shew in the Haymarket theatre, which was wholly inconsistent with the profession he had embarked in." The quotation displays all

Murphy's loose and negligent way of dealing with his facts; for, with the exception of *Miss Lucy in Town*, which can scarcely be ranked among his works at all, there is absolutely no trace of Fielding's having exhibited either "puppet-shew" or "farce" after seriously adopting the law as a profession, nor does there appear to have been much acting at the Haymarket for some time after his management had closed in 1737. Still, his superficial characteristics, which do not depend so much upon Murphy as upon those "who were intimate with him," are probably accurately described, and they sufficiently account for many of the obvious discordances of his work and life. That he was fully conscious of something higher than his actual achievement as a dramatist is clear from his own observation in later life, "that he left off writing for the stage, when he ought to have begun;"—an utterance which (we shrewdly suspect) has prompted not a little profitless speculation as to whether, if he had continued to write plays, they would have been equal to, or worse than, his novels. The discussion would be highly interesting, if there were the slightest chance that it could be attended with any satisfactory result. But the truth is, that the very materials are wanting. Fielding "left off writing for the stage" when he was under thirty; *Tom Jones* was published in 1749, when he was more than forty. His plays were written in haste; his novels at leisure, and when, for the most part, he was relieved from that "immediate urgency of want," which, according to Murphy, characterised his younger days. If—as has been suggested—we could compare a novel written at thirty with a play of the same date, or a play written at forty with *Tom Jones*,

the comparison might be instructive, although even then considerable allowances would have to be made for the essential difference between plays and novels. But, as we cannot make such a comparison, further inquiry is simply waste of time. All we can safely affirm is, that the plays of Fielding's youth did not equal the fictions of his maturity; and that, of those plays, the comedies were less successful than the farces and burlesques. Among other reasons for this latter difference one chiefly may be given:—that in the comedies he sought to reproduce the artificial world of Congreve and Wycherley, while in the burlesques and farces he depicted the world in which he lived.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE CHAMPION—JOSEPH ANDREWS.

THE *Historical Register* and *Eurydice Hiss'd* were published together in June 1737. By this time the "Licensing Act" was passed, and the "Grand Mogul's Company" dispersed for ever. Fielding was now in his thirty-first year, with a wife and probably a daughter depending on him for support. In the absence of any prospect that he would be able to secure a maintenance as a dramatic writer, he seems to have decided in spite of his comparatively advanced age, to revert to the profession for which he had originally been intended, and to qualify himself for the Bar. Accordingly, at the close of the year, he became a student of the Middle Temple, and the books of that society contain the following record of his admission: <sup>1</sup>—

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1 Nov<sup>ris</sup> 1737.

*Henricus Fielding, de East Stour in Com Dorset Ar, filius et hæres apparens Brig: Gen<sup>lis</sup>: Edmundi Fielding admissus est in Societatem Medii Templi Lond specialiter et obligatur una cum etc.*

*Et dat pro fine 4. 0. 0.*

It may be noted, as Mr. Keightley has already

<sup>1</sup> This differs slightly from previous transcripts, having been verified at the Middle Temple.

observed, that Fielding is described in this entry as of East Stour, "which would seem to indicate that he still retained his property at that place;" and further, that his father is spoken of as a "brigadier-general," whereas (according to the *Gentleman's Magazine*) he had been made a major-general in December 1735. Of discrepancies like these it is idle to attempt any explanation. But, if Murphy is to be believed, Fielding devoted himself henceforth with remarkable assiduity to the study of law. The old irregularity of life, it is alleged, occasionally asserted itself, though without checking the energy of his application. "This," says his first biographer, "prevailed in him to such a degree, that he has been frequently known, by his intimates, to retire late at night from a tavern to his chambers, and there read, and make extracts from, the most abstruse authors, for several hours before he went to bed; so powerful were the vigour of his constitution and the activity of his mind." It is to this passage, no doubt, that we owe the picturesque wet towel and inked ruffles with which Mr. Thackeray has decorated him in *Pendennis*; and, in all probability, a good deal of graphic writing from less able pens respecting his *modus vivendi* as a Templar. In point of fact, nothing is known with certainty respecting his life at this period; and what it would really concern us to learn—namely, whether by "chambers" it is to be understood that he was living alone, and, if so, where Mrs. Fielding was at the time of these protracted vigils—Murphy has not told us. Perhaps she was safe all the while at East Stour, or with her sisters at Salisbury. Having no precise information, however, it can only be recorded, that, in spite of the fitful



outbreaks above referred to, Fielding applied himself to the study of his profession with all the vigour of a man who has to make up for lost time; and that, when on the 20th of June 1740 the day came for his being "called," he was very fairly equipped with legal knowledge. That he had also made many friends among his colleagues of Westminster Hall is manifest from the number of lawyers who figure in the subscription list of the *Miscellanies*.

To what extent he was occupied by literary work during his probationary period it is difficult to say. Murphy speaks vaguely of "a large number of fugitive political tracts;" but unless the *Essay on Conversation*, advertised by Lawton Gilliver in 1737, be the same as that afterwards reprinted in the *Miscellanies*, there is no positive record of anything until the issue of *True Greatness*, an epistle to George Dodington, in January 1741, though he may, of course, have written much anonymously. Among newspapers, the one Murphy had in mind was probably the *Champion*, the first number of which is dated November 15, 1739, two years after his admission to the Middle Temple as a student. On the whole, it seems most likely, as Mr. Keightley conjectures, that his chief occupation in the interval was studying law, and that he must have been living upon the residue of his wife's fortune or his own means, in which case the establishment of the above periodical may mark the exhaustion of his resources.

The *Champion* is a paper on the model of the elder essayists. It was issued, like the *Tatler*, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Murphy says that Fielding's part in it cannot now be ascertained; but as the

"Advertisement" to the edition in two volumes of 1741 states expressly that the papers signed C. and L. are the "Work of one Hand," and as a number of those signed C are unmistakably Fielding's, it is hard to discover where the difficulty lay. The papers signed C. and L. are by far the most numerous, the majority of the remainder being distinguished by two stars, or the signature "Lilbourne." These are understood to have been from the pen of James Ralph, whose poem of *Night* gave rise to a stinging couplet in the *Dunciad*, but who was nevertheless a man of parts, and an industrious writer. As will be remembered, he had contributed a prologue to the *Temple Beau*, so that his association with Fielding must have been of some standing. Besides Ralph's essays in the *Champion*, he was mainly responsible for the *Index to the Times* which accompanied each number, and consisted of a series of brief paragraphs on current topics, or the last new book. In this way Glover's *London*, Boyse's *Deity*, Somerville's *Hobbinol*, Lillo's *Elmeric*, Dyer's *Ruins of Rome*, and other of the very minor *poetæ minores* of the day, were commented upon. These notes and notices, however, were only a subordinate feature of the *Champion*, which, like its predecessors, consisted chiefly of essays and allegories, social, moral, and political, the writers of which were supposed to be members of an imaginary "Vinegar family," described in the initial paper. Of these the most prominent was Captain Hercules Vinegar, who took all questions relating to the Army, Militia, Trained-Bands, and "fighting Part of the Kingdom." His father, Nehemiah Vinegar, presided over history and politics; his uncle, Counsellor Vinegar, over law and judicature;

and Dr. John Vinegar his cousin, over medicine and natural philosophy. To others of the family—including Mrs. Joan Vinegar, who was charged with domestic affairs—were allotted classic literature, poetry and the Drama, and fashion. This elaborate scheme was not very strictly adhered to, and the chief writer of the group is Captain Hercules.

Shorn of the contemporary interest which formed the chief element of its success when it was first published, it must be admitted that, in the present year of grace, the *Champion* is hard reading. A kind of lassitude—a sense of uncongenial task-work—broods heavily over Fielding's contributions, except the one or two in which he is quickened into animation by his antagonism to Cibber; and although, with our knowledge of his after achievements, it is possible to trace some indications of his yet unrevealed powers, in the absence of such knowledge it would be difficult to distinguish the *Champion* from the hundred-and-one forgotten imitators of the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, whose names have been so patiently chronicled by Dr. Nathan Drake. There is, indeed, a certain obvious humour in the account of Captain Vinegar's famous club, which he had inherited from Hercules, and which had the enviable property of falling of itself upon any knave in company, and there is a dash of the *Tom Jones* manner in the noisy activity of that excellent housewife Mrs. Joan. Some of the lighter papers, such as the one upon the "Art of Puffing," are amusing enough; and of the visions, that which is based upon Lucian, and represents Charon as stripping his freight of all their superfluous incumbrances in order to lighten his boat, has a double

interest, since it contains references not only to Cibber, but also (though this appears to have been hitherto overlooked) to Fielding himself. The "tall Man," who at Mercury's request strips off his "old Grey Coat with great Readiness," but refuses to part with "half his Chin," which the shepherd of souls regards as false, is clearly intended for the writer of the paper, even without the confirmation afforded by the subsequent allusions to his connection with the stage. His "length of chin and nose," sufficiently apparent in his portrait, was a favourite theme for contemporary personalities. Of the moral essays, the most remarkable are a set of four papers, entitled *An Apology for the Clergy*, which may perhaps be regarded as a set-off against the sarcasms of *Pasquin* on priestcraft. They depict, with a great deal of knowledge and discrimination, the pattern priest as Fielding conceived him. To these may be linked an earlier picture, taken from life, of a country parson who, in his simple and dignified surroundings, even more closely resembles the Vicar of Wakefield than Mr. Abraham Adams. Some of the more general articles contain happy passages. In one there is an admirable parody of the Norman-French jargon, which in those days added superfluous obscurity to legal utterances; while another, on "Charity," contains a forcible exposition of the inexpediency, as well as inhumanity, of imprisonment for debt. References to contemporaries, the inevitable Cibber excepted, are few, and these seem mostly from the pen of Ralph. The following, from that of Fielding, is notable as being one of the earliest authoritative testimonies to the merits of Hogarth: "I esteem (says he) the ingenious *Mr. Hogarth* as one of

the most useful Satyrists any Age hath produced. In his excellent Works you see the delusive Scene exposed with all the Force of Humour, and, on casting your Eyes on another Picture, you behold the dreadful and fatal Consequence. I almost dare affirm that those two Works of his, which he calls the *Rake's* and the *Harlot's Progress*, are calculated more to serve the Cause of Virtue, and for the Preservation of Mankind, than all the *Folio's* of Morality which have been ever written; and a sober Family should no more be without them, than without the *Whole Duty of Man* in their House." He returned to the same theme in the Preface to *Joseph Andrews* with a still apter phrase of appreciation:—"It hath been thought a vast Commendation of a Painter, to say his Figures seem to breathe; but surely, it is a much greater and nobler Applause, that they appear to think."<sup>1</sup>

When the *Champion* was rather more than a year old, Colley Cibber published his famous *Apology*. To the attacks made upon him by Fielding at different times he had hitherto printed no reply—perhaps he had no opportunity of doing so. But in his eighth chapter, when speaking of the causes which led to the Licensing Act, he takes occasion to refer to his assailant in terms which Fielding must have found exceedingly galling. He carefully abstained from mentioning his name, on the ground that it could do him no good, and was of

<sup>1</sup> Fielding occasionally refers to Hogarth for the pictorial types of his characters. Bridget Allworthy, he tells us, resembled the starched prude in *Morning*; and Mrs. Partridge and Parson Thwackum have their originals in the *Harlot's Progress*. It was Fielding, too, who said that the *Enraged Musician* was "enough to make a man deaf to look at" (*Voyage to Lisbon*, 1755, p. 50).



no importance; but he described him as "a broken Wit," who had sought notoriety "by raking the Channel" (*i.e.* Kennel), and "pelted his Superiors." He accused him, with a scandalised gravity that is as edifying as Chesterfield's irony, of attacking "Religion, Laws, Government, Priests, Judges, and Ministers." He called him, either in allusion to his stature, or his pseudonym in the *Champion*, a "*Herculean Satyr*," a "*Drawcansir* in Wit"—"who, to make his Poetical Fame immortal, like another *Erostratus*, set Fire to his Stage, by writing up to an Act of Parliament to demolish it. I shall not," he continues, "give the particular Strokes of his Ingenuity a Chance to be remembered, by reciting them; it may be enough to say, in general Terms, they were so openly flagrant, that the Wisdom of the Legislature thought it high time, to take a proper Notice of them."

Fielding was not the man to leave such a challenge unanswered. In the *Champion* for April 22, 1740, and two subsequent papers, he replied with a slashing criticism of the *Apology*, in which, after demonstrating that it must be written in English because it was written in no other language, he gravely proceeds to point out examples of the author's superiority to grammar and learning—and in general, subjects its pretentious and slipshod style to a minute and highly detrimental examination. In a further paper he returns to the charge by a mock trial of one "Col. *Apol.*" (*i.e.* Colley-*Apology*), arraigning him for that, "not having the Fear of Grammar before his Eyes," he had committed an unpardonable assault upon his mother-tongue. Fielding's knowledge of legal forms and phraseology enabled

him to make a happy parody of court procedure, and Mr. Lawrence says that this particular "*jeu d'esprit* obtained great celebrity." But the happiest stroke in the controversy—as it seems to us—is one which escaped Mr. Lawrence, and occurs in the paper already referred to, where Charon and Mercury are shown denuding the luckless passengers by the Styx of their surplus *impedimenta*. Among the rest, approaches "an elderly Gentleman with a Piece of wither'd Laurel on his head." From a little book, which he is discovered (when stripped) to have bound close to his heart, and which bears the title of *Love in a Riddle*—an unsuccessful pastoral produced by Cibber at Drury Lane in 1729—it is clear that this personage is intended for none other than the Apologist, who, after many entreaties, is finally compelled to part with his treasure. "I was surprized," continues Fielding, "to see him pass Examination with his Laurel on, and was assured by the Standers by, that *Mercury* would have taken it off, if he had seen it."

These attacks in the *Champion* do not appear to have received any direct response from Cibber. But they were reprinted in a rambling production issued from "Curl's chaste press" in 1740, and entitled the *Tryal of Colley Cibber, Comedian, &c.* At the end of this there is a short address to "*the Self-dubb'd Captain Hercules Vinegar, alias Buffoon*," to the effect that "the malevolent Flings exhibited by him and his Man *Ralph*," have been faithfully reproduced. Then comes the following curious and not very intelligible "Advertisement:"—

"If the Ingenious *Henry Fielding* Esq.; (Son of the Hon. Lieut. General *Fielding*, who upon his Return from his Travels entered himself of the *Temple* in order to study the

Law, and married one of the pretty Miss *Cradocks* of *Salisbury*) will own himself the AUTHOR of 18 strange Things called *Tragical Comedies* and *Comical Tragedies*, lately advertised by *J. Watts*, of *Wild-Court*, Printer, he shall be mentioned in Capitals in the *Third Edition* of Mr. CIBBER's *Life*, and likewise be placed among the *Poete minores Dramatici* of the Present Age: Then will both his Name and Writings be remembered on Record in the immortal *Poetical Register* written by Mr. GILES JACOB."

The "poetical register" indicated was the book of that name, containing the *Lives and Characteristics of the English Dramatic Poets*, which Mr. Giles Jacob, an industrious literary hack, had issued in 1723. Mr. Lawrence is probably right in his supposition, based upon the foregoing advertisement, that Fielding "had openly expressed resentment at being described by Cibber as 'a broken wit,' without being mentioned by name." He never seems to have wholly forgotten his animosity to the actor, to whom there are frequent references in *Joseph Andrews*; and, as late as 1749, he is still found harping on "the withered laurel" in a letter to Lyttelton. Even in his last work, the *Voyage to Lisbon*, Cibber's name is mentioned. The origin of this protracted feud is obscure; but, apart from want of sympathy, it must probably be sought for in some early misunderstanding between the two in their capacities of manager and author. As regards Theophilus Cibber, his desertion of Highmore was sufficient reason for the ridicule cast upon him in the *Author's Farce* and elsewhere. With Mrs. Charke, the Laureate's intractable and eccentric daughter, Fielding was naturally on better terms. She was, as already stated, a member of the Great Mogul's Company, and it is worth noting that some of the sar-

casms in *Pasquin* against her father were put into the mouth of Lord Place, whose part was taken by this undutiful child. All things considered, both in this controversy and the later one with Pope, Cibber did not come off worst. His few hits were personal and unscrupulous, and they were probably far more deadly in their effects than any of the ironical attacks which his adversaries, on their part, directed against his poetical ineptitude or halting "parts of speech." Despite his superlative coxcombry and egotism, he was, moreover, a man of no mean abilities. His *Careless Husband* is a far better acting play than any of Fielding's, and his *Apology*, which even Johnson allowed to be "well-done," is valuable in many respects, especially for its account of the contemporary stage. In describing an actor or actress he had few equals—witness his skilful portrait of Nokes, and his admirably graphic vignette of Mrs. Verbruggen as that "finish'd Impertinent," Melantha, in Dryden's *Marriage à-la-Mode*.

The concluding paper in the collected edition of the *Champion*, published in 1741, is dated June 19, 1740. On the day following Fielding was called to the Bar by the benchers of the Middle Temple, and (says Mr. Lawrence) "chambers were assigned him in Pump Court." Simultaneously with this, his regular connection with journalism appears to have ceased, although from his statement in the Preface to the *Miscellanies*,—that "as long as from *June 1741*," he had "desisted from writing one Syllable in the *Champion*, or any other public Paper,"—it may perhaps be inferred that up to that date he continued to contribute now and then. This, nevertheless, is by no means clear. His last utterance in the pub-

lished volumes is certainly in a sense valedictory, as it refers to the position acquired by the *Champion*, and the difficulty experienced in establishing it. Incidentally, it pays a high compliment to Pope, by speaking of "the divine Translation of the *Iliad*, which he [Fielding] has lately with *no Disadvantage to the Translator* COMPARED with the Original," the point of the sentence so impressed by its typography, being apparently directed against those critics who had condemned Pope's work without the requisite knowledge of Greek. From the tenor of the rest of the essay it may, however, be concluded that the writer was taking leave of his enterprise; and, according to a note by Boswell, in his *Life of Johnson*, it seems that Mr. Reed of Staple Inn possessed documents which showed that Fielding at this juncture, probably in anticipation of more lucrative legal duties, surrendered the reins to Ralph. The *Champion* continued to exist for some time longer; indeed, it must be regarded as long-lived among the essayists, since the issue which contained its well-known criticism on Garrick is No. 455, and appeared late in 1742. But as far as can be ascertained, it never again obtained the honours of a reprint.

Although, after he was called to the Bar, Fielding practically relinquished periodical literature, he does not seem to have entirely desisted from writing. In Sylvanus Urban's Register of Books, published during January 1741, is advertised the poem *Of True Greatness* afterwards included in the *Miscellanies*; and the same authority announces the *Vernoniad*, an anonymous burlesque Epic prompted by Admiral Vernon's popular expedition against Porto Bello in 1739, "with six Ships



only." That Fielding was the author of the latter is sufficiently proved by his order to Mr. Nourse (printed in Roscoe's edition), to deliver fifty copies to Mr Chappel. Another sixpenny pamphlet, entitled *The Opposition, a Vision*, issued in December of the same year, is enumerated by him, in the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, among the few works he had published "since the End of *June* 1741;" and, provided it can be placed before this date, he may be credited with a political sermon called the *Crisis* (1741), which is ascribed to him upon the authority of a writer in Nichols's *Anecdotes*. He may also, before "the End of *June* 1741," have written other things; but it is clear from his *Caveat* in the above-mentioned "Preface," together with his complaint that "he had been very unjustly censured, as well on account of what he had not writ, as for what he had," that much more has been laid to his charge than he ever deserved. Among ascriptions of this kind may be mentioned the curious *Apology for the Life of Mr. The Cibber, Comedian*, 1740, which is described on its title-page as a proper sequel to the autobiography of the Laureate, in whose "style and manner" it is said to be written. But, although this performance is evidently the work of some one well acquainted with the dramatic annals of the day, it is more than doubtful whether Fielding had any hand or part in it. Indeed, his own statement that "he never was, nor would be the Author of *anonymous Scandal* [the italics are ours] on the private History or Family of any Person whatever," should be regarded as conclusive.

During all this time he seems to have been steadily applying himself to the practice of his profession, if,

indeed, that weary hope deferred which forms the usual probation of legal preferment can properly be so described. As might be anticipated from his Salisbury connections, he travelled the Western Circuit; and, according to Hutchins's *Dorset*, he assiduously attended the Wiltshire sessions. He had many friends among his brethren of the Bar. His cousin, Henry Gould, who had been called in 1734, and who, like his grandfather, ultimately became a Judge, was also a member of the Middle Temple; and he was familiar with Charles Pratt, afterwards Lord Camden, whom he may have known at Eton, but whom he certainly knew in his barrister days. It is probable, too, that he was acquainted with Lord Northington, then Robert Henley, whose name appears as a subscriber to the *Miscellanies*, and who was once supposed to contend with Kettleby (another subscriber) for the honour of being the original of the drunken barrister in Hogarth's *Midnight Modern Conversation*, a picture which no doubt accurately represents a good many of the festivals by which Henry Fielding relieved the tedium of composing those *MS. folio* volumes on Crown or Criminal Law, which, after his death, reverted to his half-brother, Sir John. But towards the close of 1741 he was engaged upon another work which has outweighed all his most laborious forensic efforts, and which will long remain an English classic. This was *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*, published by Andrew Millar in February 1742.

In the same number, and at the same page of the *Gentleman's Magazine* which contains the advertisement of the *Vernoniad*, there is a reference to a famous novel

which had appeared in November 1740, two months earlier, and had already attained an extraordinary popularity. "Several Encomiums (says Mr. Urban) on a Series of *Familiar Letters*, publish'd but last month, entitled *PAMELA* or *Virtue rewarded*, came too late for this Magazine, and we believe there will be little Occasion for inserting them in our next; because a Second Edition will then come out to supply the Demands in the Country, it being judged in Town as great a Sign of Want of Curiosity not to have read *Pamela*, as not to have seen the *French* and *Italian Dancers*." A second edition was in fact published in the following month (February), to be speedily succeeded by a third in March and a fourth in May. Dr. Sherlock (oddly misprinted by Mrs. Barbauld as "Dr. Slocock") extolled it from the pulpit; and the great Mr. Pope was reported to have gone farther and declared that it would "do more good than many volumes of sermons." Other admirers ranked it next to the Bible; clergymen dedicated theological treatises to the author; and "even at Ranelagh"—says Richardson's biographer—"those who remember the publication say, that it was usual for ladies to hold up the volumes of *Pamela* to one another, to shew that they had got the book that every one was talking of." It is perhaps hypercritical to observe that Ranelagh Gardens were not opened until eighteen months after Mr. Rivington's *duodecimos* first made their appearance; but it will be gathered from the tone of some of the foregoing commendations that its morality was a strong point with the new candidate for literary fame; and its voluminous title-page did indeed proclaim at large that it was "Published in order to cultivate the Prin-

ciples of Virtue and Religion in the Minds of the Youth of Both Sexes." Its author, Samuel Richardson, was a middle-aged London printer, a vegetarian and water-drinker, a worthy, domesticated, fussy, and highly-nervous little man. Delighting in female society, and accustomed to act as confidant and amanuensis for the young women of his acquaintance, it had been suggested to him by some bookseller friends that he should prepare a "little volume of Letters, in a common style, on such subjects as might be of use to those country readers, who were unable to indite for themselves." As Hogarth's Conversation Pieces grew into his Progresses, so this project seems to have developed into *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. The necessity for some connecting link between the letters suggested a story, and the story chosen was founded upon the actual experiences of a young servant girl, who, after victoriously resisting all the attempts made by her master to seduce her, ultimately obliged him to marry her. It is needless to give any account here of the minute and deliberate way in which Richardson filled in this outline. As one of his critics, D'Alembert, has unanswerably said—"La nature est bonne à imiter, mais non pas jusqu'à l'ennui,"—and the author of *Pamela* has plainly disregarded this useful law. On the other hand, the tedium and elaboration of his style have tended, in these less leisurely days, to condemn his work to a neglect which it does not deserve. Few writers—it is a truism to say so—have excelled him in minute analysis of motive, and knowledge of the human heart. About the final morality of his heroine's long-drawn defence of her chastity it may, however, be permitted to doubt; and,



in contrasting the book with Fielding's work, it should not be forgotten that, irreproachable though it seemed to the author's admirers, good Dr. Watts complained (and with reason) of the indelicacy of some of the scenes.

But, for the moment, we are more concerned with the effect which *Pamela* produced upon Henry Fielding, struggling with the "eternal want of pence, which vexes public men," and vaguely hoping for some profitable opening for powers which had not yet been satisfactorily exercised. To his robust and masculine genius, never very delicately sensitive where the relations of the sexes are concerned, the strange conjunction of purity and precaution in Richardson's heroine was a thing unnatural, and a theme for inextinguishable Homeric laughter. That Pamela, through all her trials, could really have cherished any affection for her unscrupulous admirer would seem to him a sentimental absurdity, and the unprecedented success of the book would sharpen his sense of its assailable side. Possibly, too, his acquaintance with Richardson, whom he knew personally, but with whom he could have had no kind of sympathy, disposed him against his work. In any case, the idea presently occurred to Fielding of depicting a young man in circumstances of similar importunity at the hands of a dissolute woman of fashion. He took for his hero Pamela's brother, and by a malicious stroke of the pen turned the Mr. B. of *Pamela* into Squire Booby. But the process of invention rapidly carried him into paths far beyond the mere parody of Richardson, and it is only in the first portion of the book that he really remembers his intention. After chapter x. the story follows its natural course, and there is little or nothing of Lady



Booby, or her frustrate amours. Indeed, the author does not even pretend to preserve congruity as regards his hero, for, in chapter v., he makes him tell his mistress that he has never been in love, while in chapter xi. we are informed that he had long been attached to the charming Fanny. Moreover, in the intervening letters which Joseph writes to his sister Pamela, he makes no reference to this long-existent attachment, with which, one would think, she must have been perfectly familiar. These discrepancies all point, not so much to negligence on the part of the author, as to an unconscious transformation of his plan. He no doubt speedily found that mere ridicule of Richardson was insufficient to sustain the interest of any serious effort, and, besides, must have been secretly conscious that the "Pamela" characteristics of his hero were artistically irreconcilable with the personal bravery and cudgel-playing attributes with which he had endowed him. Add to this that the immortal Mrs. Slipslop and Parson Adams—the latter especially—had begun to acquire an importance with their creator for which the initial scheme had by no means provided; and he finally seems to have disregarded his design, only returning to it in his last chapters in order to close his work with some appearance of consistency. The *History of Joseph Andrews*, it has been said, might well have dispensed with Lady Booby altogether, and yet, without her, not only this book, but *Tom Jones* and *Amelia* also, would probably have been lost to us. The accident which prompted three such masterpieces cannot be honestly regretted.

It was not without reason that Fielding added prominently to his title-page the name of Mr. Abraham Adams.

If he is not the real hero of the book, he is undoubtedly the character whose fortunes the reader follows with the closest interest. Whether he is smoking his black and consolatory pipe in the gallery of the inn, or losing his way while he meditates a passage of Greek, or groaning over the fatuities of the man-of-fashion in Leonora's story, or brandishing his famous crabstick in defence of Fanny, he is always the same delightful mixture of benevolence and simplicity, of pedantry and credulity and ignorance of the world. He is "compact," to use Shakespeare's word, of the oddest contradictions,—the most diverting eccentricities. He has Aristotle's *Politics* at his fingers' ends, but he knows nothing of the daily *Gazetteers*; he is perfectly familiar with the Pillars of Hercules, but he has never even heard of the Levant. He travels to London to sell a collection of sermons which he has forgotten to carry with him, and in a moment of excitement he tosses into the fire the copy of *Æschylus* which it has cost him years to transcribe. He gives irreproachable advice to Joseph on fortitude and resignation, but he is overwhelmed with grief when his child is reported to be drowned. When he speaks upon faith and works, on marriage, on school discipline, he is weighty and sensible; but he falls an easy victim to the plausible professions of every rogue he meets, and is willing to believe in the principles of Mr. Peter Pounce, or the humanity of Parson Trulliber. Not all the discipline of hog's blood and cudgels and cold water to which he is subjected can deprive him of his native dignity; and as he stands before us in the short great-coat under which his ragged cassock is continually making its appearance, with his old wig and battered hat, a clergy-

man whose social position is scarcely above that of a footman, and who supports a wife and six children upon a cure of twenty-three pounds a year, which his outspoken honesty is continually jeopardising, he is a far finer figure than Pamela in her coach-and-six, or Bellarmine in his cinnamon velvet. If not, as Mr. Lawrence says, with exaggerated enthusiasm, "the grandest delineation of a pattern-priest which the world has yet seen," he is assuredly a noble example of primitive goodness and practical Christianity. It is certain—as Mr. Forster and Mr. Keightley have pointed out—that Goldsmith borrowed some of his characteristics for Dr. Primrose, and it has been suggested that Sterne remembered him in more than one page of *Tristram Shandy*.

Next to Parson Adams, perhaps the best character in *Joseph Andrews*—though of an entirely different type—is Lady Booby's "Waiting-Gentlewoman," the excellent Mrs. Slipslop. Her sensitive dignity, her easy changes from servility to insolence, her sensuality, her inimitably distorted vocabulary, which Sheridan borrowed for Mrs. Malaprop, and Dickens modified for Mrs. Gamp, are all peculiarities which make up a personification of the richest humour and the most life-like reality. Mr. Peter Pounce, too, with his "scoundrel maxims," as disclosed in that remarkable dialogue which is said to be "better worth reading than all the Works of *Colley Cibber*," and in which charity is defined as consisting rather in a disposition to relieve distress than in an actual act of relief; Parson Trulliber with his hogs, his greediness, and his willingness to prove his Christianity by fisticuffs; shrewish Mrs. Tow-wouse with her scold's tongue, and her erring but perfectly subjugated husband,—these

again are portraits finished with admirable spirit and fidelity. Andrews himself, and his blushing sweetheart, do not lend themselves so readily to humorous art. Nevertheless the former, when freed from the wiles of Lady Booby, is by no means a despicable hero, and Fanny is a sufficiently fresh and blooming heroine. The characters of Pamela and Mr. Booby are fairly preserved from the pages of their original inventor. But when Fielding makes Parson Adams rebuke the pair for laughing in church at Joseph's wedding, and puts into the lady's mouth a sententious little speech upon her altered position in life, he is adding some ironical touches which Richardson would certainly have omitted.

No selection of personages, however, even of the most detailed and particular description, can convey any real impression of the mingled irony and insight, the wit and satire, the genial but perfectly remorseless revelation of human springs of action, which distinguish scene after scene of the book. Nothing, for example, can be more admirable than the different manifestations of meanness which take place among the travellers of the stage-coach, in the oft-quoted chapter where Joseph, having been robbed of everything, lies naked and bleeding in the ditch. There is Miss Grave-airs, who protests against the indecency of his entering the vehicle, but like a certain lady in the *Rake's Progress*, holds the sticks of her fan before her face while he does so, and who is afterwards found to be carrying Nantes under the guise of Hungary-water; there is the lawyer who advises that the wounded man shall be taken in, not from any humane motive, but because he is afraid of being involved in legal proceedings if they leave him to his fate;

there is the wit who seizes the occasion for a burst of facetious double-meanings, chiefly designed for the discomfiture of the prude; and, lastly, there is the coachman, whose only concern is the shilling for his fare, and who refuses to lend either of the useless greatcoats he is sitting upon, lest "they should be made bloody," leaving the shivering suppliant to be clothed by the generosity of the postilion ("a Lad," says Fielding with a fine touch of satire, "who hath been since transported for robbing a Hen-roost"). This worthy fellow accordingly strips off his only outer garment, "at the same time swearing a great Oath," for which he is duly rebuked by the passengers, "that he would rather ride in his Shirt all his Life, than suffer a Fellow-Creature to lie in so miserable a Condition." Then there are the admirable scenes which succeed Joseph's admission into the inn; the discussion between the bookseller and the two parsons as to the publication of Adams's sermons, which the "Clergy would be certain to cry down," because they inculcate good works against faith; the debate before the justice as to the manuscript of *Æschylus*, which is mistaken for one of the Fathers; and the pleasant discourse between the poet and the player which, beginning by compliments, bids fair to end in blows. Nor are the stories of Leonora and Mr. Wilson without their interest. They interrupt the straggling narrative far less than the Man of the Hill interrupts *Tom Jones*, and they afford an opportunity for varying the epic of the highway by pictures of polite society which could not otherwise be introduced. There can be little doubt, too, that some of Mr. Wilson's town experiences were the reflection of the author's own career; while the charac-



teristics of Leonora's lover Horatio,—who was “a young Gentleman of a good Family, bred to the Law,” and recently called to the Bar, whose “Face and Person were such as the Generality allowed handsome: but he had a Dignity in his Air very rarely to be seen,” and who “had Wit and Humour, with an Inclination to Satire, which he indulged rather too much”—read almost like a complimentary description of Fielding himself.

Like Hogarth, in that famous drinking scene to which reference has already been made, Fielding was careful to disclaim any personal portraiture in *Joseph Andrews*. In the opening chapter of Book iii. he declares “once for all that he describes not Men, but Manners; not an Individual, but a Species,” although he admits that his characters are “taken from Life.” In his “Preface,” he reiterates this profession, adding that in copying from nature, he has “used the utmost Care to obscure the Persons by such different Circumstances, Degrees, and Colours, that it will be impossible to guess at them with any degree of certainty.” Nevertheless—as in Hogarth's case—neither his protests nor his skill have prevented some of those identifications which are so seductive to the curious; and it is generally believed,—indeed, it was expressly stated by Richardson and others,—that the prototype of Parson Adams was a friend of Fielding, the Reverend William Young. Like Adams, he was a scholar and devoted to *Æschylus*; he resembled him, too, in his trick of snapping his fingers, and his habitual absence of mind. Of this latter peculiarity it is related that on one occasion, when a chaplain in Marlborough's wars, he strolled abstractedly into the enemy's lines with his beloved

*Æschylus* in his hand. His peaceable intentions were so unmistakable that he was instantly released, and politely directed to his regiment. Once, too, it is said, on being charged by a gentleman with sitting for the portrait of Adams, he offered to knock the speaker down, thereby supplying additional proof of the truth of the allegation. He died in August 1757, and is buried in the Chapel of Chelsea Hospital. The obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* describes him as "late of Gillingham, Dorsetshire," which would make him a neighbour of the novelist.<sup>1</sup> Another tradition connects Mr. Peter Pounce with the scrivener and usurer Peter Walter, whom Pope had satirised, and whom Hogarth is thought to have introduced into Plate i. of *Marriage à-la-Mode*. His sister lived at Salisbury; and he himself had an estate at Stalbridge Park, which was close to East Stour. From references to Walter in the *Champion* for May 31, 1740, as well as in the *Essay on Conversation*, it is clear that Fielding knew him personally, and disliked him. He may, indeed, have been among those county magnates whose criticism was so objectionable to Captain Booth during his brief residence in Dorsetshire. Parson Trulliber, also, according to Murphy, was Fielding's first tutor—Mr. Oliver of Motcombe. But his widow denied the resemblance; and it is hard to believe that this portrait is not overcharged. In all these cases, however, there is no reason for supposing that Fielding may not have thoroughly believed in the sincerity of his attempts to avoid the exact reproduction of actual persons, although, rightly or wrongly, his present-

<sup>1</sup> Lord Thurlow was accustomed to find a later likeness to Fielding's hero in his *protégé*, the poet Crabbe.

ments were speedily identified. With ordinary people it is by salient characteristics that a likeness is established; and no variation of detail, however skilful, greatly affects this result. In our own days we have seen that, in spite of both authors, the public declined to believe that the Harold Skimpole of Charles Dickens, and George Eliot's Dinah Morris, were not perfectly recognisable copies of living originals.

Upon its title-page, *Joseph Andrews* is declared to be "written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes," and there is no doubt that, in addition to being subjected to an unreasonable amount of ill-usage, Parson Adams has manifest affinities with Don Quixote. Scott, however, seems to have thought that Scarron's *Roman Comique* was the real model, so far as mock-heroic was concerned; but he must have forgotten that Fielding was already the author of *Tom Thumb*, and that Swift had written the *Battle of the Books*. Resemblances—not of much moment—have also been traced to the *Paysan Parvenu* and the *Histoire de Marianne* of Marivaux. With both these books Fielding was familiar; in fact, he expressly mentions them, as well as the *Roman Comique*, in the course of his story, and they doubtless exercised more or less influence upon his plan. But in the Preface, from which we have already quoted, he describes that plan; and this, because it is something definite, is more interesting than any speculation as to his determining models. After marking the division of the Epic, like the Drama, into Tragedy and Comedy, he points out that it may exist in prose as well as verse, and he proceeds to explain that what he has attempted in *Joseph Andrews* is "a comic Epic-Poem in Prose,"

differing from serious romance in its substitution of a light and ridiculous" fable for a "grave and solemn" one, of inferior characters for those of superior rank, and of ludicrous for sublime sentiments. Sometimes in the diction he has admitted burlesque, but never in the sentiments and characters, where, he contends, it would be out of place. He further defines the only source of the ridiculous to be affectation, of which the chief causes are vanity and hypocrisy. Whether this scheme was an after-thought it is difficult to say; but it is certainly necessary to a proper understanding of the author's method—a method which was to find so many imitators. Another passage in the Preface is worthy of remark. With reference to the pictures of vice which the book contains, he observes: "First, That it is very difficult to pursue a Series of human Actions, and keep clear from them. Secondly, That the Vices to be found here [*i.e.* in *Joseph Andrews*] are rather the accidental Consequences of some human Frailty, or Foible, than Causes habitually existing in the Mind. Thirdly, That they are never set forth as the Objects of Ridicule but Detestation. Fourthly, That they are never the principal Figure at the Time on the Scene; and, lastly, they never produce the intended Evil." In reading some pages of Fielding it is not always easy to see that he has strictly adhered to these principles; but it is well to recall them occasionally, as constituting at all events the code that he desired to follow.

Although the popularity of Fielding's first novel was considerable, it did not, to judge by the number of editions, at once equal the popularity of the book by which it was suggested. *Pamela*, as we have seen,

speedily ran through four editions; but it was six months before Millar published the second and revised edition of *Joseph Andrews*; and the third did not appear until more than a year after the date of first publication. With Richardson, as might be expected, it was never popular at all, and to a great extent it is possible to sympathise with his annoyance. The daughter of his brain, whom he had piloted through so many troubles, had grown to him more real than the daughters of his body, and to see her at the height of her fame made contemptible by what in one of his letters he terms "a lewd and ungenerous engraftment," must have been a sore trial to his absorbed and self-conscious nature, and one which not all the consolations of his consistory of feminine flatterers—"my ladies," as the little man called them—could wholly alleviate. But it must be admitted that his subsequent attitude was neither judicious nor dignified. He pursued Fielding henceforth with steady depreciation, caught eagerly at any scandal respecting him, professed himself unable to perceive his genius, deplored his "lowness," and comforted himself by reflecting that, if he pleased at all, it was because he had learned the art from *Pamela*. Of Fielding's other contemporary critics, one only need be mentioned here, more on account of his literary eminence than of the special felicity of his judgment. "I have myself," writes Gray to West, "upon your recommendation, been reading *Joseph Andrews*. The incidents are ill laid and without invention; but the characters have a great deal of nature, which always pleases even in her lowest shapes. Parson Adams is perfectly well; so is Mrs. Slipslop, and the story of



Wilson; and throughout he [*the author*] shews himself well read in Stage-Coaches, Country Squires, Inns, and Inns of Court. His reflections upon high people and low people, and misses and masters, are very good. However the exaltedness of some minds (or rather as I shrewdly suspect their insipidity and want of feeling or observation) may make them insensible to these light things, (I mean such as characterise and paint nature) yet surely they are as weighty and much more useful than your grave discourses upon the mind, the passions, and what not." And thereupon follows that fantastic utterance concerning the romances of MM. Marivaux and Crébillon *filz*, which has disconcerted so many of Gray's admirers. We suspect that any reader who should nowadays contrast the sickly and sordid intrigue of the *Paysan Parvenu* with the healthy animalism of *Joseph Andrews* would greatly prefer the latter. Yet Gray's verdict, though cold, is not indiscriminating, and is perhaps as much as one could expect from his cloistered and fastidious taste.

Various anecdotes, all more or less apocryphal, have been related respecting the first appearance of *Joseph Andrews*, and the sum paid to the author for the copy-right. A reference to the original assignment, now in the Forster Library at South Kensington, definitely settles the latter point. The amount in "lawful Money of Great Britain," received by "Henry Fielding, Esq." from "Andrew Millar of St. Clement's Danes in the Strand," was £183:11s. In this document, as in the order to Nourse of which a *facsimile* is given by Roscoe, both the author's name and signature are written with the old-fashioned double f, and he calls himself "Field-

ing" and not "Feilding," like the rest of the Denbigh family. If we may trust an anecdote given by Kippis, Lord Denbigh once asked his kinsman the reason of this difference. "I cannot tell, my lord," returned the novelist, "unless it be that my branch of the family was the first that learned to spell." In connection with this assignment, however, what is perhaps even more interesting than these discrepancies is the fact that one of the witnesses was William Young. Thus we have Parson Adams acting as witness to the sale of the very book which he had helped to immortalise.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MISCELLANIES—JONATHAN WILD.

IN March 1742, according to an article in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, attributed to Samuel Johnson, "the most popular Topic of Conversation" was the *Account of the Conduct of the Dowager Dutchess of Marlborough, from her first coming to Court, to the Year 1710*, which, with the help of Hooke of the *Roman History*, the "terrible old Sarah" had just put forth. Among the little cloud of *Sarah-Ads* and *Old Wives' Tales* evoked by this production, was a *Vindication* of her Grace by Fielding, specially prompted, as appears from the title-page, by the "late *scurrilous* Pamphlet" of a "noble Author." If this were not acknowledged to be from Fielding's pen in the Preface to the *Miscellanies* (in which collection, however, it is not reprinted), its authorship would be sufficiently proved by its being included with *Miss Lucy in Town* in the assignment to Andrew Millar referred to at the close of the preceding chapter. The price Millar paid for it was £5 : 5s., or exactly half that of the farce. But it is only reasonable to assume that the Duchess herself (who is said to have given Hooke £5000 for his help) also rewarded her champion. Whether Fielding's

admiration for the "glorious Woman" in whose cause he had drawn his pen was genuine, or whether—to use Johnson's convenient euphemism concerning Hooke—"he was acting only ministerially," are matters for speculation. His father, however, had served under the Duke, and there may have been a traditional attachment to the Churchills on the part of his family. It has even been ingeniously suggested that Sarah Fielding was her Grace's god-child;<sup>1</sup> but as her mother's name was also Sarah, no importance can be attached to the suggestion.

*Miss Lucy in Town*, as its sub-title explains, was a sequel to the *Virgin Unmask'd*, and was produced at Drury Lane in May 1742. As already stated in chapter ii., Fielding's part in it was small. It is a lively but not very creditable trifle, which turns upon certain equivocal London experiences of the Miss Lucy of the earlier piece; and it seems to have been chiefly intended to afford an opportunity for some clever imitation of the reigning Italian singers by Mrs. Clive and the famous tenor Beard. Horace Walpole, who refers to it in a letter to Mann, between an account of the opening of Ranelagh and an anecdote of Mrs. Bracegirdle, calls it "a little simple farce," and says that "Mrs. Clive mimics the Muscovita admirably, and Beard Amorevoli tolerably." Mr. Walpole detested the Muscovita, and adored Amorevoli, which perhaps accounts for the nice discrimination shown in his praise. One of the other characters, Mr. Zorobabel, a Jew, was taken by Macklin, and from another, Mrs. Haycock (afterwards changed to Mrs. Midnight), Foote is supposed to have

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough*, etc., by Mrs. A. T. Thomson, 1839.

borrowed Mother Cole in *The Minor*. A third character, Lord Bawble, was considered to reflect upon "a particular person of quality," and the piece was speedily forbidden by the Lord Chamberlain, although it appears to have been acted a few months later without opposition. One of the results of the prohibition, according to Mr. Lawrence, was a *Letter to a Noble Lord* (the Lord Chamberlain) . . . *occasioned by a Representation . . . of a Farce called "Miss Lucy in Town."* This, in spite of the Caveat in the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, he ascribes to Fielding, and styles it "a sharp expostulation . . . in which he [Fielding] disavowed any idea of a personal attack." But Mr. Lawrence must plainly have been misinformed on the subject, for the pamphlet bears little sign of Fielding's hand. As far as it is intelligible, it is rather against Miss Lucy than for her, and it makes no reference to Lord Bawble's original. The name of this injured patrician seems indeed never to have transpired; but he could scarcely have been in any sense an exceptional member of the Georgian aristocracy.

In the same month that *Miss Lucy in Town* appeared at Drury Lane, Millar published it in book form. In the following June, T. Waller of the Temple-Cloisters issued the first of a contemplated series of translations from Aristophanes by Henry Fielding, Esq., and the Rev. William Young who sat for Parson Adams. The play chosen was *Plutus, the God of Riches*, and a notice upon the original cover stated that, according to the reception it met with from the public, it would be followed by the others. It must be presumed that "the distressed, and at present, declining State of



Learning" to which the authors referred in their dedication to Lord Talbot, was not a mere form of speech, for the enterprise does not seem to have met with sufficient encouragement to justify its continuance, and this special rendering has long since been supplanted by the more modern versions of Mitchell, Frere, and others. Whether Fielding took any large share in it is not now discernible. It is most likely, however, that the bulk of the work was Young's, and that his colleague did little more than furnish the Preface, which is partly written in the first person, and betrays its origin by a sudden and not very relevant attack upon the "pretty, dapper, brisk, smart, pert Dialogue" of Modern Comedy into which the "infinite Wit" of Wycherley had degenerated under Cibber. It also contains a compliment to the numbers of the "inimitable Author" of the *Essay on Man*.

This is the second compliment which Fielding had paid to Pope within a brief period, the first having been that in the *Champion* respecting the translation of the *Iliad*. What his exact relations with the author of the *Dunciad* were, has never been divulged. At first they seem to have been rather hostile than friendly. Fielding had ridiculed the Romish Church in the *Old Debauchees*, a course which Pope could scarcely have approved; and he was, moreover, the cousin of Lady Mary, now no longer throned in the Twickenham Temple. Pope had commented upon a passage in *Tom Thumb*, and Fielding had indirectly referred to Pope in the *Covent Garden Tragedy*. When it had been reported that Pope had gone to see *Pasquin*, the statement had been at once contradicted. But

Fielding was now, like Pope, against Walpole; and *Joseph Andrews* had been published. It may therefore be that the compliments in *Plutus* and the *Champion* were the result of some *rapprochement* between the two. It is, nevertheless, curious that, at this very time, an attempt appears to have been made to connect the novelist with the controversy which presently arose out of Cibber's well-known letter to Pope. In August 1742, the month following its publication, among the pamphlets to which it gave rise, was announced *The Cudgel; or, a Crab-tree Lecture. To the Author of the Dunciad.* "By Hercules Vinegar, Esq." This very mediocre satire in verse is still to be found at the British Museum; but even if it were not included in Fielding's general disclaimer as to unsigned work, it would be difficult to connect it with him. To give but one reason, it would make him the ally and adherent of Cibber,—which is absurd. In all probability, like another Grub Street squib under the same pseudonym, it was by Ralph, who had already attacked Pope, and continued to maintain the Captain's character in the *Champion* long after Fielding had ceased to write for it. It is even possible that Ralph had some share in originating the Vinegar family, for it is noticeable that the paper in which they are first introduced bears no initials. In this case he would consider himself free to adopt the name, however disadvantageous that course might be to Fielding's reputation. And it is clear that, whatever their relations had been in the past, they were for the time on opposite sides in politics, since while Fielding had been vindicating the Duchess of Marlborough, Ralph had been writing against her.

Garrick had begged him to retrench a certain objectionable passage. This Fielding, either from indolence or unwillingness, declined to do, asserting that if it was not good, the audience might find it out. The passage was promptly hissed, and Garrick returned to the green-room, where the author was solacing himself with a bottle of champagne. "What is the matter, Garrick?" said he to the flustered actor; "what are they hissing now?" He was informed with some heat that they had been hissing the very scene he had been asked to withdraw, "and," added Garrick, "they have so frightened me, that I shall not be able to collect myself again the whole night."—"Oh!" answered the author, with an oath, "they HAVE found it out, have they?" This rejoinder is usually quoted as an instance of Fielding's contempt for the intelligence of his audience; but nine men in ten, it may be observed, would have said something of the same sort.

The only other thing which need be referred to in connection with this comedy—the last of his own dramatic works which Fielding ever witnessed upon the stage—is Macklin's doggerel Prologue. Mr. Lawrence attributes this to Fielding; but he seems to have overlooked the fact that in the *Miscellanies* it is headed, "*Writ and Spoken by Mr. Macklin*," which gives it more interest as the work of an outsider than if it had been a mere laugh by the author at himself. Garrick is represented as too busy to speak the prologue; and Fielding, who has been "drinking to raise his Spirits," has begged Macklin with his "long, dismal, Mercy-begging Face," to go on and apologise. Macklin then pretends to recognise him among the audience, and pokes fun at

his anxieties, telling him that he had better have stuck to "honest *Abram Adams*," who, "in spite of Critics, can make his Readers laugh." The words "in spite of critics" indicate another distinction between Fielding's novels and plays, which should have its weight in any comparison of them. The censors of the pit, in the eighteenth century, seem to have exercised an unusual influence in deciding whether a play should succeed or not;<sup>1</sup> and, from Fielding's frequent references to friends and enemies, it would almost seem as if he believed their suffrages to be more important than a good plot and a witty dialogue. On the other hand, no coterie of Wits and Templars could kill a book like *Joseph Andrews*. To say nothing of the opportunities afforded by the novel for more leisurely character-drawing, and greater by-play of reflection and description—its reader was an isolated and independent judge; and in the long run the difference told wonderfully in favour of the author. Macklin was obviously right in recommending Fielding, even in jest, to stick to Parson Adams, and from the familiar publicity of the advice it may also be inferred, not only that the opinion was one commonly current, but that the novel was unusually popular.

The *Wedding Day* was issued separately in February 1743. It must therefore be assumed that the three volumes of *Miscellanies*, by Henry Fielding, Esq., in which it was reprinted, and to which reference has so often been made in these pages, did not appear until

<sup>1</sup> Miller's *Coffee-House*, 1737, for example, was damned by the Templars because it was supposed to reflect on the keepers of "Dick's."—(*Biog. Dramatica*.)

later.<sup>1</sup> They were published by subscription; and the list, in addition to a large number of aristocratic and legal names, contains some of more permanent interest. Side by side with the Chesterfields and Marlboroughs and Burlingtons and Denbighs, come William Pitt and Henry Fox, Esqs., with Dodington and Winnington and Hanbury Williams. The theatrical world is well represented by Garrick and Mrs. Woffington and Mrs. Clive. Literature has no names of any eminence except that of Young; for Savage and Whitehead, Mallet and Benjamin Hoadly, are certainly *ignes minores*. Pope is conspicuous for his absence; so also are Horace Walpole and Gray, while Richardson, of course, is wanting. Johnson, as yet only the author of *London*, and journeyman to Cave, could scarcely be expected in the roll; and, in any case, his friendship for the author of *Pamela* would probably have kept him away. Among some other well-known eighteenth century names are those of Dodsley and Millar the booksellers, and the famous Vauxhall *impresario* Jonathan Tyers.

The first volume of the *Miscellanies*, besides a lengthy Preface, includes the author's poems, essays *On Conversation*, *On the Knowledge of the Characters of Men*, *On Nothing*, a squib upon the transactions of the Royal Society, a translation from Demosthenes, and one or two minor pieces. Much of the biographical material contained in the Preface has already been made use of, as well as those verses which can be definitely dated, or which relate to the author's love-affairs. The hitherto unnoticed portions of the volume consist

<sup>1</sup> By advertisement in the *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, they would seem to have been published early in April 1743.



chiefly of Epistles, in the orthodox eighteenth century fashion. One—already referred to—is headed *Of True Greatness*; another, inscribed to the Duke of Richmond, *Of Good-nature*; while a third is addressed to a friend *On the Choice of a Wife*. This last contains some sensible lines, but although Roscoe has managed to extract two quotable passages, it is needless to imitate him here. These productions show no trace of the authentic Fielding. The essays are more remarkable, although, like Montaigne's, they are scarcely described by their titles. That on *Conversation* is really a little treatise on good breeding; that on the *Characters of Men*, a lay sermon against Fielding's pet antipathy—hypocrisy. Nothing can well be wiser, even now, than some of the counsels in the former of these papers on such themes as the limits of raillery, the duties of hospitality, and the choice of subject in general conversation. Nor, however threadbare they may look to-day, can the final conclusions be reasonably objected to:—"First, That every Person who indulges his Ill-nature or Vanity, at the Expense of others; and in introducing Uneasiness, Vexation, and Confusion into Society, however exalted or high-titled he may be, is thoroughly ill-bred;" and "Secondly, That whoever, from the Goodness of his Disposition or Understanding, endeavours to his utmost to cultivate the Good-humour and Happiness of others, and to contribute to the Ease and Comfort of all his Acquaintance, however low in Rank Fortune may have placed him, or however clumsy he may be in his Figure or Demeanour, hath, in the truest sense of the Word, a Claim to Good-Breeding." One fancies that this essay must have been a favourite with

the historian of the *Book of Snobs* and the creator of Major Dobbin.

The *Characters of Men* is not equal to the *Conversation*. The theme is a wider one; and the end proposed,—that of supplying rules for detecting the real disposition through all the social disguises which cloak and envelop it,—can scarcely be said to be attained. But there are happy touches even in this; and when the author says —“I will venture to affirm, that I have known some of the best sort of Men in the World (to use the vulgar Phrase,) who would not have scrupled cutting a Friend’s Throat; and a Fellow whom no Man should be seen to speak to, capable of the highest Acts of Friendship and Benevolence,” one recognises the hand that made the sole good Samaritan in *Joseph Andrews* “a Lad who hath since been transported for robbing a Hen-roost.” The account of the Terrestrial Chrysipus or Guinea, a burlesque on a paper read before the Royal Society on the Fresh Water Polypus, is chiefly interesting from the fact that it is supposed to be written by Petrus Gualterus (Peter Walter), who had an “extraordinary Collection” of them. He died, in fact, worth £300,000. The only other paper in the volume of any value is a short one *Of the Remedy of Affliction for the Loss of our Friends*, to which we shall presently return.

The farce of *Eurydice*, and the *Wedding Day*, which, with *A Journey from this World to the Next*, etc., make up the contents of the second volume of the *Miscellanies*, have been already sufficiently discussed. But the *Journey* deserves some further notice. It has been suggested that this curious Lucianic production may have been prompted by the vision of Mercury and Charon in the

*Champion*, though the kind of allegory of which it consists is common enough with the elder essayists ; and it is notable that another book was published in April 1743, under the title of *Cardinal Fleury's Journey to the other World*, which is manifestly suggested by Quevedo. Fielding's *Journey*, however, is a fragment which the author feigns to have found in the garret of a stationer in the Strand. Sixteen out of five-and-twenty chapters in Book i. are occupied with the transmigrations of Julian the Apostate, which are not concluded. Then follows another chapter from Book xix., which contains the history of Anna Boleyn, and the whole breaks off abruptly. Its best portion is undoubtedly the first ten chapters, which relate the writer's progress to Elysium, and afford opportunity for many strokes of satire. Such are the whimsical terror of the spiritual traveller in the stage-coach, who hears suddenly that his neighbour has died of smallpox, a disease he had been dreading all his life ; and the punishment of Lord Scrape, the miser, who is doomed to dole out money to all comers, and who, after "being purified in the Body of a Hog," is ultimately to return to earth again. Nor is the delight of some of those who profit by his enforced assistance less keenly realised :—"I remarked a poetical Spirit in particular, who swore he would have a hearty Gripe at him : 'For,' says he, the Rascal not only refused to subscribe to my Works ; but sent back my Letter unanswered, tho' I'm a better Gentleman than himself.'" The descriptions of the City of Diseases, the Palace of Death, and the Wheel of Fortune from which men draw their chequered lots, are all unrivalled in their way. But here, as always, it is in his pictures of human nature that Fielding shines,

and it is this that makes the chapters in which Minos is shown adjudicating upon the separate claims of the claimants to enter Elysium the most piquant of all. The virtuoso and butterfly hunter, who is repulsed "with great Scorn;" the dramatic author who is admitted (to his disgust), not on account of his works, but because he has once lent "the whole Profits of a Benefit Night to a Friend;" the parson who is turned back, while his poor parishioners are admitted; and the trembling wretch who has been hanged for a robbery of eighteen-pence, to which he had been driven by poverty, but whom the judge welcomes cordially because he had been a kind father, husband, and son; all these are conceived in that humane and generous spirit which is Fielding's most engaging characteristic. The chapter immediately following, which describes the literary and other inhabitants of Elysium, is even better. Here is Leonidas, who appears to be only moderately gratified with the honour recently done him by Mr. Glover the poet; here is Homer, toying with Madam Dacier, and profoundly indifferent as to his birth-place and the continuity of his poems; here, too, is Shakespeare, who, foreseeing future commentators and the "New Shakespere Society," declines to enlighten Betterton and Booth as to a disputed passage in his works, adding, "I marvel nothing so much as that Men will gird themselves at discovering obscure Beauties in an Author. Certes the greatest and most pregnant Beauties are ever the plainest and most evidently striking; and when two Meanings of a Passage can in the least ballance our Judgements which to prefer, I hold it matter of unquestionable Certainty that neither is worth a farthing." Then, again, there are Addison and Steele, who are described with so

pleasant a knowledge of their personalities that, although the passage has been often quoted, there seems to be no reason why it should not be quoted once more :—

“*Virgil* then came up to me, with Mr. *Addison* under his Arm. Well, Sir, said he, how many Translations have these few last Years produced of my *Aeneid*? I told him, I believed several, but I could not possibly remember; for I had never read any but Dr. *Trapp*’s.<sup>1</sup>—Ay, said he, that is a curious Piece indeed! I then acquainted him with the Discovery made by Mr. *Warburton* of the *Eleusinian* Mysteries couched in his 6th book. What Mysteries? said Mr. *Addison*. The *Eleusinian*, answered *Virgil*, which I have disclosed in my 6th Book. How! replied *Addison*. You never mentioned a word of any such Mysteries to me in all our Acquaintance. I thought it was unnecessary, cried the other, to a Man of your infinite Learning: besides, you always told me, you perfectly understood my meaning. Upon this I thought the Critic looked a little out of countenance, and turned aside to a very merry Spirit, one *Dick Steele*, who embraced him, and told him, He had been the greatest Man upon Earth; that he readily resigned up all the Merit of his own Works to him. Upon which, *Addison* gave him a gracious Smile, and clapping him on the Back with much Solemnity, cried out, *Well said, Dick*.”

After encountering these and other notabilities, including Tom Thumb and Livy, the latter of whom takes occasion to commend the ingenious performances of Lady Marlborough’s assistant, Mr. Hooke, the author meets with Julian the Apostate, and from this point the narrative grows languid. Its unfinished condition may perhaps be accepted as a proof that Fielding himself had wearied of his scheme.

The third volume of the *Miscellanies* is wholly occupied with the remarkable work entitled the *History of the Life of the late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*. As in the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Trapp’s translation of the *Aeneid* was published in 1718.



case of the *Journey from this World to the Next*, it is not unlikely that the first germ of this may be found in the pages of the *Champion*. "Reputation"—says Fielding in one of the essays in that periodical—"often courts those most who regard her the least. Actions have sometimes been attended with Fame, which were undertaken in Defiance of it. *Jonathan Wyld* himself had for many years no small Share of it in this Kingdom." The book now under consideration is the elaboration of the idea thus casually thrown out. Under the name of a notorious thief-taker hanged at Tyburn in 1725, Fielding has traced the Progress of a Rogue to the Gallows, showing by innumerable subtle touches that the (so-called) greatness of a villain does not very materially differ from any other kind of greatness, which is equally independent of goodness. This continually suggested affinity between the ignoble and the pseudo-noble is the text of the book. Against genuine worth (its author is careful to explain) his satire is in no wise directed. He is far from considering "*Newgate* as no other than Human Nature with its Mask off;" but he thinks "we may be excused for suspecting, that the splendid Palaces of the Great are often no other than *Newgate* with the Mask on." Thus *Jonathan Wild the Great* is a prolonged satire upon the spurious eminence in which benevolence, honesty, charity, and the like have no part; or, as Fielding prefers to term it, that false or "Bombast greatness" which is so often mistaken for the "*true Sublime* in Human Nature"—Greatness and Goodness combined. So thoroughly has he explained his intention in the Prefaces to the *Miscellanies*, and to the book itself, that it is difficult to

comprehend how Scott could fail to see his drift. Possibly, like some others, he found the subject repugnant and painful to his kindly nature. Possibly, too, he did not, for this reason, study the book very carefully, for, with the episode of Heartfree under one's eyes, it is not strictly accurate to say (as he does) that it presents "a picture of complete vice, *unrelieved by any thing of human feeling*, and never by any accident even deviating into virtue." If the author's introduction be borne in mind, and if the book be read steadily in the light there supplied, no one can refrain from admiring the extraordinary skill and concentration with which the plan is pursued, and the adroitness with which, at every turn, the villainy of Wild is approximated to that of those securer and more illustrious criminals with whom he is so seldom confused. And Fielding has never carried one of his chief and characteristic excellences to so great perfection: the book is a model of sustained and sleepless irony. To make any extracts from it—still less to make any extracts which should do justice to it, is almost impracticable; but the edifying discourse between Wild and Count La Ruse in Book i., and the pure comedy of that in Book iv. with the Ordinary of Newgate (who objects to wine, but drinks punch because "it is no where spoken against in Scripture"), as well as the account of the prison faction between Wild and Johnson,<sup>1</sup> with its

<sup>1</sup> Some critics at this point appear to have identified Johnson and Wild with Lord Wilmington and Sir Robert Walpole (who resigned in 1742), while Mr. Keightley suspects that Wild throughout typifies Walpole. But the advertisement "from the Publisher" to the edition of 1754 disclaims any such "personal Application." "The Truth is (he says), as a very corrupt State of Morals is here represented, the Scene seems very properly to have been laid in

admirable speech of the "grave Man" against Party, may all be cited as examples of its style and method. Nor should the character of Wild in the last chapter, and his famous rules of conduct, be neglected. It must be admitted, however, that the book is not calculated to suit the nicely-sensitive in letters; or, it may be added, those readers for whom the evolution of a purely intellectual conception is either unmeaning or uninteresting. Its place in Fielding's works is immediately after his three great novels, and this is more by reason of its subject than its workmanship, which could hardly be excelled. When it was actually composed is doubtful. If it may be connected with the already-quoted passage in the *Champion*, it must be placed after March 1740, which is the date of the paper; but, from a reference to Peter Pounce in Book ii., it might also be supposed to have been written after *Joseph Andrews*. The Bath simile in chapter xiv. Book i., makes it likely that some part of it was penned at that place, where, from an epigram in the *Miscellanies* "written *Extempore* in the Pump Room," it is clear that Fielding was staying in 1742. But, whenever it was completed, we are inclined to think that it was planned and begun before *Joseph Andrews* was published, as it is in the highest degree improbable that Fielding, always carefully watching the public taste, would have followed up that fortunate adventure in a new direction by a work so entirely different from it as *Jonathan Wild*.

*Newgate*: Nor do I see any Reason for introducing any allegory at all; unless we will agree that there are, without those Walls, some other Bodies of Men of worse Morals than those within; and who have, consequently, a Right to change Places with its present Inhabitants." The writer was probably Fielding.

A second edition of the *Miscellanies* appeared in the same year as the first, namely in 1743. From this date until the publication of *Tom Jones* in 1749, Fielding produced no work of signal importance, and his personal history for the next few years is exceedingly obscure. We are inclined to suspect that this must have been the most trying period of his career. His health was shattered, and he had become a martyr to gout, which seriously interfered with the active practice of his profession. Again, "about this time," says Murphy vaguely, after speaking of the *Wedding Day*, he lost his first wife. That she was alive in the winter of 1742-3 is clear, for, in the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, he describes himself as being then laid up, "with a favourite Child dying in one Bed, and my Wife in a Condition very little better, on another, attended with other Circumstances, which served as very proper Decorations to such a Scene,"—by which Mr. Keightley no doubt rightly supposes him to refer to writs and bailiffs. It must also be assumed that Mrs. Fielding was alive when the Preface was written, since, in apologising for an apparent delay in publishing the book, he says the "real Reason" was "the dangerous Illness of one from whom I *draw* [the italics are ours] all the solid Comfort of my Life." There is another unmistakable reference to her in one of the minor papers in the first volume, viz. that *Of the Remedy of Affliction for the Loss of our Friends*. "I remember the most excellent of Women, and tenderest of Mothers, when, after a painful and dangerous Delivery, she was told she had a Daughter, answering; *Good God! have I produced a Creature who is to undergo what I have suffered!* Some Years afterwards, I heard the same Woman, on the



Death of that very Child, then one of the loveliest Creatures ever seen, comforting herself with reflecting, that *her Child could never know what it was to feel such a Loss as she then lamented.*" Were it not for the passages already quoted from the Preface, it might almost be concluded from the tone of the foregoing quotation and the final words of the paper, which refer to our meeting with those we have lost in Heaven, that Mrs. Fielding was already dead. But the use of the word "draw" in the Preface affords distinct evidence to the contrary. It is therefore most probable that she died in the latter part of 1743, having been long in a declining state of health. For a time her husband was inconsolable. "The fortitude of mind," says Murphy, "with which he met all the other calamities of life, deserted him on this most trying occasion." His grief was so vehement "that his friends began to think him in danger of losing his reason."

That Fielding had depicted his first wife in Sophia Western has already been pointed out, and we have the authority of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Richardson for saying that she was afterwards reproduced in *Amelia*. "Amelia," says the latter, in a letter to Mrs. Donnellan, "even to her *noselessness*, is again his first wife." Some of her traits, too, are to be detected in the Mrs. Wilson of *Joseph Andrews*. But, beyond these indications, we hear little about her. Almost all that is definitely known is contained in a passage of the admirable *Introductory Anecdotes* contributed by Lady Louisa Stuart in 1837 to Lord Wharnccliffe's edition of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters and Works*. This account was based upon the recollections of Lady Bute, Lady Mary's daughter.



"Only those persons (says Lady Stuart) are mentioned here of whom Lady Bute could speak from her own recollection or her mother's report. Both had made her well informed of every particular that concerned her relation Henry Fielding; nor was she a stranger to that beloved first wife whose picture he drew in his *Amelia*, where, as she said, even the glowing language he knew how to employ did not do more than justice to the amiable qualities of the original, or to her beauty, although this had suffered a little from the accident related in the novel,—a frightful overturn, which destroyed the gristle of her nose.<sup>1</sup> He loved her passionately, and she returned his affection; yet led no happy life, for they were almost always miserably poor, and seldom in a state of quiet and safety. All the world knows what was his imprudence; if ever he possessed a score of pounds, nothing could keep him from lavishing it idly, or make him think of to-morrow. Sometimes they were living in decent lodgings with tolerable comfort; sometimes in a wretched garret without necessaries; not to speak of the spunging-houses and hiding-places where he was occasionally to be found. His

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<sup>1</sup> That any one could have remained lovely after such a catastrophe is difficult to believe. But probably Lady Bute (or Lady Stuart) exaggerated its effects; for—to say nothing of the fact that, throughout the novel, *Amelia's* beauty is continually commended—in the delightfully feminine description which is given of her by Mrs. James in Book xi. chap. i., pp. 114-15 of the first edition of 1752, although she is literally pulled to pieces, there is no reference whatever to her nose, which may be taken as proof positive that it was not an assailable feature. Moreover, in the book as we now have it, Fielding, obviously in deference to contemporary criticism, inserted the following specific passages:—"She was, indeed, a most charming woman; and I know not whether the little scar on her nose did not rather add to, than diminish her beauty" (Book iv. chap. vii.); and in Mrs. James's portrait:—"Then her nose, as well proportioned as it is, has a visible scar on one side." No previous biographer seems to have thought it necessary to make any mention of these statements, while Johnson's speech about "That vile broken nose, *never cured*," and Richardson's coarsely-malignant utterance to Mrs. Donnellan, are everywhere industriously remembered and repeated.

elastic gaiety of spirit carried him through it all ; but, meanwhile, care and anxiety were preying upon her more delicate mind, and undermining her constitution. She gradually declined, caught a fever, and died in his arms."

As usual, Mr. Keightley has done his best to test this statement to the utmost. Part of his examination may be neglected, because it is based upon the misconception that Lord Wharncliffe, Lady Mary's greatgrandson, and not Lady Stuart, her granddaughter, was the writer of the foregoing account. But as a set-off to the extreme destitution alleged, Mr. Keightley very justly observes that Mrs. Fielding must for some time have had a maid, since it was a maid who had been devotedly attached to her whom Fielding subsequently married. He also argues that "living in a garret and skulking in out o' the way retreats," are incompatible with studying law and practising as a barrister. Making every allowance, however, for the somewhat exaggerated way in which those of high rank often speak of the distresses of their less opulent kinsfolk, it is probable that Fielding's married life was one of continual shifts and privations. Such a state of things is completely in accordance with his profuse nature<sup>1</sup> and his precarious means. Of his family by the first Mrs. Fielding no very material particulars have been preserved. Writing, in November 1745, in the *True Patriot*, he speaks of having a son and a daughter, but no son by his first wife seems to have survived him. The late Colonel Chester found the burial of a "James Fielding, son of Henry Fielding," recorded under date of 19th February 1736, in the register of St. Giles in

<sup>1</sup> The passage as to his imprudence is, oddly enough, omitted from Mr. Keightley's quotation.

the Fields; but it is by no means certain that this entry refers to the novelist. A daughter, Harriet or Harriot, certainly did survive him, for she is mentioned in the *Voyage to Lisbon* as being of the party who accompanied him. Another daughter, as already stated, probably died in the winter of 1742-3; and the *Journey from this World to the Next* contains the touching reference to this or another child, of which Dickens writes so warmly in one of his letters. "I presently," says Fielding, speaking of his entrance into Elysium, "met a little Daughter, whom I had lost several Years before. Good Gods! what Words can describe the Raptures, the melting passionate Tenderness, with which we kiss'd each other, continuing in our Embrace, with the most extatic Joy, a Space, which if Time had been measured here as on Earth, could not have been less than half a Year."

From the death of Mrs. Fielding until the publication of the *True Patriot* in 1745 another comparative blank ensues in Fielding's history; and it can only be filled by the assumption that he was still endeavouring to follow his profession as a barrister. His literary work seems to have been confined to a Preface to the second edition of his sister's novel of *David Simple*, which appeared in 1744. This, while rendering fraternal justice to that now forgotten book, is memorable for some personal utterances on Fielding's part. In denying the authorship of *David Simple*, which had been attributed to him, he takes occasion to appeal against the injustice of referring anonymous works to his pen, in the face of his distinct engagement in the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, that he would thenceforth write nothing except over his own signature; and he complains that such a course has a

tendency to injure him in a profession to which "he has applied with so arduous and intent a diligence, that he has had no leisure, if he had inclination, to compose anything of this kind (i.e. *David Simple*)."

At the same time, he formally withdraws his promise, since it has in no wise exempted him from the scandal of putting forth anonymous work. From other passages in this "Preface," it may be gathered the immediate cause of irritation was the assignment to his pen of "that infamous poultry libel" the *Causidicade*, a satire directed at the law in general, and some of the subscribers to the *Miscellanies* in particular. "This," he says, "accused me not only of being a bad writer, and a bad man, but with downright idiotism, in flying in the face of the greatest men of my profession." It may easily be conceived that such a report must be unfavourable to a struggling barrister, and Fielding's anxiety on this head is a strong proof that he was still hoping to succeed at the Bar. To a subsequent collection of *Familiar Letters between the Principal Characters in David Simple and some others*, he supplied another preface three years later, together with five little-known epistles which, nevertheless, are not without evidence of his characteristic touch.

A life of ups and downs like Fielding's is seldom remarkable for its consistency. It is therefore not surprising to find that, despite his desire in 1744 to refrain from writing, he was again writing in 1745. The landing of Charles Edward attracted him once more into the ranks of journalism, on the side of the Government, and gave rise to the *True Patriot*, a weekly paper, the first number of which appeared in November. This, having come to an end with the



Rebellion, was succeeded in December 1747 by the *Jacobite's Journal*, supposed to emanate from "John Trott-Plaid, Esq.," and intended to push the discomfiture of Jacobite sentiment still further. It is needless to discuss these mainly political efforts at any length. They are said to have been highly approved by those in power: it is certain that they earned for their author the stigma of "pension'd scribbler." Both are now very rare; and in Murphy the former is represented by twenty-four numbers, the latter by two only. The *True Patriot* contains a dream of London abandoned to the rebels, which is admirably graphic; and there is also a prophetic chronicle of events for 1746, in which the same idea is treated in a lighter and more satirical vein. But perhaps the most interesting feature is the reappearance of Parson Adams, who addresses a couple of letters to the same periodical—one on the rising generally, and the other on the "young England" of the day, as exemplified in a very offensive specimen he had recently encountered at Mr. Wilson's. Other minor points of interest in connection with the *Jacobite's Journal*, are the tradition associating Hogarth with the rude woodcut headpiece (a Scotch man and woman on an ass led by a monk) which surmounted its earlier numbers, and the genial welcome given in No. 5, perhaps not without some touch of contrition, to the two first volumes, then just published, of Richardson's *Clarissa*. The pen is the pen of an imaginary "correspondent," but the words are unmistakably Fielding's:—

"When I tell you I have lately received this Pleasure [*i.e.* of reading a new master-piece], you will not want me to inform you that I owe it to the Author of *CLARISSA*. Such



Simplicity, such Manners, such deep Penetration into Nature; such Power to raise and alarm the Passions, few Writers, either ancient or modern, have been possessed of. My Affections are so strongly engaged, and my Fears are so raised, by what I have already read, that I cannot express my Eagerness to see the rest. Sure this Mr. *Richardson* is Master of all that Art which *Horace* compares to Witchcraft

—Pectus inaniter angit,  
Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet  
Ut Magus.—”

Between the discontinuance of the *True Patriot* and the establishment of its successor occurred an event, the precise date of which has been hitherto unknown, namely, Fielding's second marriage. The account given of this by Lady Louisa Stuart is as follows:—

“His [Fielding's] biographers seem to have been shy of disclosing that after the death of this charming woman [his first wife] he married her maid. And yet the act was not so discreditable to his character as it may sound. The maid had few personal charms, but was an excellent creature, devotedly attached to her mistress, and almost broken-hearted for her loss. In the first agonies of his own grief, which approached to frenzy, he found no relief but from weeping along with her; nor solace, when a degree calmer, but in talking to her of the angel they mutually regretted. This made her his habitual confidential associate, and in process of time he began to think he could not give his children a tenderer mother, or secure for himself a more faithful housekeeper and nurse. At least this was what he told his friends; and it is certain that her conduct as his wife confirmed it, and fully justified his good opinion.”

It has now been ascertained that the marriage took place at St. Bene't's, Paul's Wharf, an obscure little church in the City, at present surrendered to a Welsh congregation, but at that time, like Mary-le-bone old church, much

in request for unions of a private character. The date in the register is the 27th of November 1747. The second Mrs. Fielding's maiden name, which has been hitherto variously reported as Macdonnell, Macdonald, and Macdaniel, is given as Mary Daniel,<sup>1</sup> and she is further described as "of St. Clement's Danes, Middlesex, Spinster." Either previously to this occurrence, or immediately after it, Fielding seems to have taken two rooms in a house in Back Lane, Twickenham, "not far," says the Rev. Mr. Cobbett in his *Memorials*, "from the site of Copt Hall." In 1872 this house was still standing,—a quaint old-fashioned wooden structure;<sup>2</sup>—and from hence, on the 25th February 1748, was baptized the first of the novelist's sons concerning whom any definite information exists—the William Fielding who, like his father, became a Westminster magistrate. Beyond suggesting that it may supply a reason why, during Mrs. Fielding's life-time, her husband's earliest biographer made no reference to the marriage, it is needless to dwell upon the proximity between the foregoing dates. In other respects the circumstance now first made public is not inconsistent with Lady Stuart's narrative; and there is no doubt, from the references to her in the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* and elsewhere, that Mary Daniel did prove an excellent wife, mother, and nurse. Another thing is made clear by the date established, and this is that the verses "On Felix; Marry'd to a Cook-Maid" in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July 1746, to which Mr. Lawrence refers, cannot possibly have anything to do with Fielding.

<sup>1</sup> See note to Fielding's letter in Chap. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Now (1883) it no longer exists, and a row of cottages occupies the site.

although they seem to indicate that alliances of the kind were not unusual. Perhaps *Pamela* had made them fashionable. On the other hand, the supposed allusion to Lyttelton and Fielding, to be found in the first edition of *Peregrine Pickle*, but afterwards suppressed, receives a certain confirmation. "When," says Smollett, speaking of the relations of an imaginary Mr. Spondy with Gosling Scrag, who is understood to represent Lyttelton, "he is inclined to marry his own cook-wench, his gracious patron may condescend to give the bride away; and may finally settle him in his old age, as a trading Westminster justice." That, looking to the facts, Fielding's second marriage should have gained the approval and countenance of Lyttelton is no more than the upright and honourable character of the latter would lead us to expect.

The *Jacobite's Journal* ceased to appear in November 1748. In the early part of the December following, the remainder of Smollett's programme came to pass, and by Lyttelton's interest Fielding was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Westminster. From a letter in the *Bedford Correspondence*, dated 13th December 1748, respecting the lease of a house or houses which would qualify him to act for Middlesex, it would seem that the county was afterwards added to his commission. He must have entered upon his office in the first weeks of December, as upon the ninth of that month one John Salter was committed to the Gatehouse by Henry Fielding, Esq., "of Bow Street, Covent Garden, formerly Sir Thomas de Veil's." Sir Thomas de Veil, who died in 1746, and whose *Memoirs* had just been published, could not, however, have been Fielding's immediate predecessor.

## CHAPTER V.

### TOM JONES.

WRITING from Basingstoke to his brother Tom, on the 29th October 1746, Joseph Warton thus refers to a visit he paid to Fielding :—

"I wish you had been with me last week, when I spent two evenings with Fielding and his sister, who wrote David Simple, and you may guess I was very well entertained. The lady indeed retir'd pretty soon, but Russell and I sat up with the Poet [Warton no doubt uses the word here in the sense of 'maker' or 'creator'] till one or two in the morning, and were inexpressibly diverted. I find he values, as he justly may, his *Joseph Andrews* above all his writings: he was extremely civil to me, I fancy, on my Father's account."<sup>1</sup>

This mention of *Joseph Andrews* has misled some of Fielding's biographers into thinking that he ranked that novel above *Tom Jones*. But, in October 1746, *Tom Jones* had not been published; and, from the absence of any reference to it by Warton, it is only reasonable to conclude that it had not yet assumed a definite form, or Fielding, who was by no means uncommunicative, would in all probability have spoken of it

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the Rev. Thomas Warton, Vicar of Basingstoke, and sometime Professor of Poetry at Oxford.

as an effort from which he expected still greater things. It is clear, too, that at this date he was staying in London, presumably in lodgings with his sister; and it is also most likely that he lived much in town when he was conducting the *True Patriot* and the *Jacobite's Journal*. At other times he would appear to have had no settled place of abode. There are traditions that *Tom Jones* was composed in part at Salisbury, in a house at the foot of Milford Hill; and again that it was written at Twiverton, or Twerton-on-Avon, near Bath, where, as the Vicar pointed out in *Notes and Queries* for March 15th, 1879, there still exists a house called Fielding's Lodge, over the door of which is a stone crest of a phoenix rising out of a mural coronet. This latter tradition is supported by the statement of Mr. Richard Graves, author of the *Spiritual Quixote*, and rector, circa 1750, of the neighbouring parish of Claverton, who says in his *Trifling Anecdotes of the late Ralph Allen*, that Fielding while at Twerton used to dine almost daily with Allen at Prior Park. There are also traces of his residence at Bath itself; and of visits to the seat of Lyttelton's father at Hagley in Worcestershire. Towards the close of 1747 he had, as before stated, rooms in Back Lane, Twickenham; and it must be to this or to some earlier period that Walpole alludes in his *Parish Register* (1759):—

“Here Fielding met his bunter Muse  
And, as they quaff'd the fiery juice,  
Droll Nature stamp'd each lucky hit  
With unimaginable wit;”—

a quatrain in which the last lines excuse the first. According to Mr. Cobbett's already-quoted *Memorials of Twickenham*, he left that place upon his appointment as a



Middlesex magistrate, when he moved to Bow Street. His house in Bow Street belonged to John, Duke of Bedford; and he continued to live in it until a short time before his death. It was subsequently occupied by his half-brother and successor, Sir John,<sup>1</sup> who, writing to the Duke in March 1770, to thank him for his munificent gift of an additional ten years to the lease, recalls "that princely instance of generosity which his Grace shewed to his late brother, Henry Fielding."

What this was, is not specified. It may have been the gift of the leases of those tenements which, as explained, were necessary to qualify Fielding to act as a Justice of the Peace for the county of Middlesex; it may even have been the lease of the Bow Street house; or it may have been simply a gift of money. But whatever it was, it was something considerable. In his appeal to the Duke, at the close of the last chapter, Fielding referred to previous obligations, and in his dedication of *Tom Jones* to Lyttelton, he returns again to his Grace's beneficence. Another person, of whose kindness grateful but indirect mention is made in the same dedication, is Ralph Allen, who, according to Derrick, the Bath M.C., sent the novelist a present of £200, before he had even made his acquaintance,<sup>2</sup> which, from the reference to Allen in *Joseph Andrews*, probably began before 1742. Lastly, there is Lyttelton himself, concerning whom, in addition to a sentence which implies that he actually suggested the writing of *Tom Jones*, we have

<sup>1</sup> In the riots of '80—as Dickens has not forgotten to note in *Barnaby Rudge*—the house was destroyed by the mob, who burned Sir John's goods in the street (Boswell's *Johnson*, chap. lxx.)

<sup>2</sup> Derrick's *Letters*, 1767, ii. 95.

the express statements on Fielding's part that "without your Assistance this History had never been completed," and "I partly owe to you my Existence during great Part of the Time which I have employed in composing it." These words must plainly be accepted as indicating pecuniary help; and, taking all things together, there can be little doubt that for some years antecedent to his appointment as a Justice of the Peace, Fielding was in straitened circumstances, and was largely aided, if not practically supported, by his friends. Even supposing him to have been subsidised by Government as alleged, his profits from the *True Patriot* and the *Jacobite's Journal* could not have been excessive; and his gout, of which he speaks in one of his letters to the Duke of Bedford, must have been a serious obstacle in the way of his legal labours.

*The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, was published by Andrew Millar on the 28th of February 1749, and its appearance in six volumes, 12mo, was announced in the *General Advertiser* of that day's date. There had been no author's name on the title-page of *Joseph Andrews*; but *Tom Jones* was duly described as "by Henry Fielding, Esq.," and bore the motto from Horace, seldom so justly applied, of "*Mores hominum multorum vidit.*" The advertisement also ingenuously stated that as it was "impossible to get Sets bound fast enough to answer the Demand for them, such Gentlemen and Ladies as pleased, might have them sew'd in Blue Paper and Boards at the Price of 16s. a Set." The date of issue sufficiently disposes of the statement of Cunningham and others, that the book was written at Bow Street. Little more than the dedication, which is preface as well, can have been pro-

duced by Fielding in his new home. Making fair allowance for the usual tardy progress of a book through the press, and taking into consideration the fact that the author was actively occupied with his yet unfamiliar magisterial duties, it is most probable that the last chapter of *Tom Jones* had been penned before the end of 1748, and that after that time it had been at the printer's. For the exact price paid to the author by the publisher on this occasion we are indebted to Horace Walpole, who, writing to George Montagu in May 1749, says—"Millar the bookseller has done very generously by him [Fielding]: finding *Tom Jones*, for which he had given him six hundred pounds, sell so greatly, he has since given him another hundred."

It is time, however, to turn from these particulars to the book itself. In *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding's work had been mainly experimental. He had set out with an intention which had unexpectedly developed into something else. That something else, he had explained, was the comic epic in prose. He had discovered its scope and possibilities only when it was too late to re-cast his original design; and though *Joseph Andrews* has all the freshness and energy of a first attempt in a new direction, it has also the manifest disadvantages of a mixed conception and an uncertain plan. No one had perceived these defects more plainly than the author; and in *Tom Jones* he set himself diligently to perfect his new-found method. He believed that he foresaw a "new Province of Writing," of which he regarded himself with justice as the founder and lawgiver; and in the "prolegomenous, or introductory Chapters" to each book—those delightful resting-spaces where, as George Eliot

says, "he seems to bring his arm-chair to the proscenium and chat with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English"—he takes us, as it were, into his confidence, and discourses frankly of his aims and his way of work. He looked upon these little "initial Essays" indeed, as an indispensable part of his scheme. They have given him, says he more than once, "the greatest Pains in composing" of any part of his book, and he hopes that, like the Greek and Latin mottoes in the *Spectator*, they may serve to secure him against imitation by inferior authors.<sup>1</sup> Naturally a great deal they contain is by this time commonplace, although it was unhackneyed enough when Fielding wrote. The absolute necessity in work of this kind for genius, learning, and knowledge of the world, the constant obligation to preserve character and probability—to regard variety and the law of contrast:—these are things with which the modern tiro (however much he may fail to possess or observe them) is now supposed to be at least theoretically acquainted. But there are other chapters in which Fielding may also be said to reveal his personal point of view, and these can scarcely be disregarded. His "Fare," he says, following the language of the table, is "HUMAN NATURE," which he shall first present "in that more plain and simple Manner in which it is found in the Country," and afterwards "hash and ragoo it with all the high *French* and *Italian* seasoning of Affectation and Vice which Courts and Cities afford." His inclination,

<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding this warning, Cumberland (who copied so much) copied these in his novel of *Henry*. On the other hand, Fielding's *French* and *Polish* translators omitted them as superfluous.



he admits, is rather to the middle and lower classes than to "the highest Life," which he considers to present "very little Humour or Entertainment." His characters (as before) are based upon actual experience; or, as he terms it, "Conversation." He does not propose to present his reader with "Models of Perfection;" he has never happened to meet with those "faultless Monsters." He holds that mankind is constitutionally defective, and that a single bad act does not, of necessity, imply a bad nature. He has also observed, without surprise, that virtue in this world is not always "the certain Road to Happiness," nor "Vice to Misery." In short, having been admitted "behind the Scenes of this Great Theatre of Nature," he paints humanity as he has found it, extenuating nothing, nor setting down aught in malice, but reserving the full force of his satire and irony for affectation and hypocrisy. His sincere endeavour, he says moreover in his dedication to Lyttelton, has been "to recommend Goodness and Innocence," and promote the cause of religion and virtue. And he has all the consciousness that what he is engaged upon is no ordinary enterprise. He is certain that his pages will outlive both "their own infirm Author" and his enemies; and he appeals to Fame to solace and reassure him—

"Come, bright Love of Fame,"—says the beautiful "Invocation" which begins the thirteenth Book,— "inspire my glowing Breast: Not thee I call, who over swelling Tides of Blood and Tears, dost bear the Heroe on to Glory, while Sighs of Millions waft his spreading Sails; but thee, fair, gentle Maid, whom *Mnesis*, happy Nymph, first on the Banks of *Hebrus* didst produce. Thee, whom *Maenonia* educated, whom *Mantua* charm'd, and who, on that fair Hill which overlooks the proud Metropolis of *Britain*, sat, with thy *Milton*, sweetly



tuning the Heroic Lyre; fill my ravished Fancy with the Hopes of charming Ages yet to come. Foretel me that some tender Maid, whose Grandmother is yet unborn, hereafter, when, under the fictitious Name of *Sophia*, she reads the real Worth which once existed in my *Charlotte*, shall, from her sympathetic Breast, send forth the heaving Sigh. Do thou teach me not only to foresee, but to enjoy, nay, even to feed on future Praise. Comfort me by a solemn Assurance, that when the little Parlour in which I sit at this Instant, shall be reduced to a worse furnished Box, I shall be read, with Honour, by those who never knew nor saw me, and whom I shall neither know nor see."

With no less earnestness, after a mock apostrophe to Wealth, he appeals to Genius:—

"Teach me (he exclaims), which to thee is no difficult Task, to know Mankind better than they know themselves. Remove that Mist which dims the Intellects of Mortals, and causes them to adore Men for their Art, or to detest them for their Cunning in deceiving others, when they are, in Reality, the Objects only of Ridicule, for deceiving themselves. Strip off the thin Disguise of Wisdom from Self-Conceit, of Plenty from Avarice, and of Glory from Ambition. Come thou, that hast inspired thy *Aristophanes*, thy *Lucian*, thy *Cervantes*, thy *Rabelais*, thy *Molière*, thy *Shakespear*, thy *Swift*, thy *Marivaux*, fill my Pages with Humour, 'till Mankind learn the Good-Nature to laugh only at the Follies of others, and the Humility to grieve at their own."

From the little group of immortals who are here enumerated, it may be gathered with whom Fielding sought to compete, and with whom he hoped hereafter to be associated. His hopes were not in vain. Indeed, in one respect, he must be held to have even outrivalled that particular predecessor with whom he has been oftenest compared. Like *Don Quixote*, *Tom Jones* is the precursor of a new order of things,—the earliest and freshest expression of a new departure in art. But

while *Tom Jones* is, to the full, as amusing as *Don Quixote*, it has the advantage of a greatly superior plan, and an interest more skilfully sustained. The incidents which, in Cervantes, simply succeed each other like the scenes in a panorama, are, in *Tom Jones*, but parts of an organised and carefully-arranged progression towards a foreseen conclusion. As the hero and heroine cross and re-cross each other's track, there is scarcely an episode which does not aid in the moving forward of the story. Little details rise lightly and naturally to the surface of the narrative, not more noticeable at first than the most everyday occurrences, and a few pages farther on become of the greatest importance. The hero makes a mock proposal of marriage to Lady Bellaston. It scarcely detains attention, so natural an expedient does it appear, and behold in a chapter or two it has become a terrible weapon in the hands of the injured Sophia! Again, when the secret of Jones' birth<sup>1</sup> is finally disclosed, we look back and discover a hundred little premonitions which escaped us at first, but which, read by the light of our latest knowledge, assume a fresh significance. At the same time, it must be admitted that the over-quoted and somewhat antiquated dictum of Coleridge, by which *Tom Jones* is grouped with the *Alchemist* and *Œdipus Tyrannus*, as one of the three most perfect plots in the world, requires revision. It is impossible to apply the term "perfect"

<sup>1</sup> Much ink has been shed respecting Fielding's reason for making his hero illegitimate. But may not "The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling," have had no subtler origin than the recent establishment of the Foundling Hospital, of which Fielding had written in the *Champion*, and in which his friend Hogarth was interested?

to a work which contains such an inexplicable stumbling-block as the Man of the Hill's story. Then again, progress and animation alone will not make a perfect plot, unless probability be superadded. And although it cannot be said that Fielding disregards probability, he certainly strains it considerably. Money is conveniently lost and found; the naïvest coincidences continually occur; people turn up in the nick of time at the exact spot required, and develop the most needful (but entirely casual) relations with the characters. Sometimes an episode is so inartistically introduced as to be almost clumsy. Towards the end of the book, for instance, it has to be shown that Jones has still some power of resisting temptation, and he accordingly receives from a Mrs. Arabella Hunt, a written offer of her hand, which he declines. Mrs. Hunt's name has never been mentioned before, nor, after this occurrence, is it mentioned again. But in the brief fortnight which Jones has been in town, with his head full of Lady Bellaston, Sophia, and the rest, we are to assume that he has unwittingly inspired her with so desperate a passion that she proposes and is refused—all in a chapter. Imperfections of this kind are more worthy of consideration than some of the minor negligences which criticism has amused itself by detecting in this famous book. Such, among others, is the discovery made by a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, that in one place winter and summer come too close together; or the "strange specimen of oscitancy" which another (it is, in fact, Mr. Keightley) considers it worth while to record respecting the misplacing of the village of Hambrook. To such trifles as these last the precept of *non offendar maculis* may safely be applied,

although Fielding, wiser than his critics, seems to have foreseen the necessity for still larger allowances :—

“Cruel indeed,” says he in his proemium to Book XI., “would it be, if such a Work as this History, which hath employed some Thousands of Hours in the composing, should be liable to be condemned, because some particular Chapter, or perhaps Chapters, may be obnoxious to very just and sensible Objections. . . . To write within such severe Rules as these, is as impossible as to live up to some splenetic Opinions ; and if we judge according to the Sentiments of some Critics, and of some Christians, no Author will be saved in this World, and no Man in the next.”

Notwithstanding its admitted superiority to *Joseph Andrews* as a work of art, there is no male character in *Tom Jones* which can compete with Parson Adams—none certainly which we regard with equal admiration. Allworthy, excellent compound of Lyttelton and Allen though he be, remains always a little stiff and cold in comparison with the “veined humanity” around him. We feel of him, as of another impeccable personage, that we “cannot breathe in that fine air, That pure severity of perfect light,” and that we want the “warmth and colour” which we find in Adams. Allworthy is a type rather than a character—a fault which also seems to apply to that Molièresque hypocrite, the younger Blifl. Fielding seems to have welded this latter together, rather than to have fused him entire, and the result is a certain lack of verisimilitude, which makes us wonder how his pinchbeck professions and vamped-up virtues could deceive so many persons. On the other hand, his father, Captain John Blifl, has all the look of life. Nor can there be any doubt about the vitality of Squire Western. Whether the



germ of his character be derived from Addison's Tory Foxhunter or not, it is certain that Fielding must have had superabundant material of his own from which to model this thoroughly representative, and at the same time, completely individual character. Western has all the rustic tastes, the narrow prejudices, the imperfect education, the unreasoning hatred to the court, which distinguished the Jacobite country gentleman of the Georgian era; but his divided love for his daughter and his horses, his good-humour and his shrewdness, his foaming impulses and his quick subsidings, his tears, his oaths, and his barbaric dialect, are all essential features in a personal portrait. When Jones has rescued Sophia, he will give him all his stable, the Chevalier and Miss Slouch excepted; when he finds he is in love with her, he is in a frenzy to "get *at un*" and "spoil his Caterwauling." He will have the surgeon's heart's blood if he takes a drop too much from Sophia's white arm; when she opposes his wishes as to Blifil, he will turn her into the street with no more than a smock, and give his estate to the "*sinking* Fund." Throughout the book he is *qualis ab incepto*,—boisterous, brutal, jovial, and inimitable; so that when finally in "Chapter the Last," we get that pretty picture of him in Sophy's nursery, protesting that the tattling of his little granddaughter is "sweeter Music than the finest Cry of Dogs in *England*," we part with him almost with a feeling of esteem. Scott seems to have thought it unreasonable that he should have "taken a beating so unresistingly from the friend of Lord Fellamar," and even hints that the passage is an interpolation, although he wisely refrains from suggesting by whom, and should have known that



it was in the first edition. With all deference to so eminent an authority, it is impossible to share his hesitation. Fielding was fully aware that even the bravest have their fits of panic. It must besides be remembered that Lord Fellamar's friend was not an effeminate dandy, but a military man—probably a professed *sabreur*, if not a salaried bully like Captain Stab in the *Rake's Progress*; that he was armed with a stick and Western was not; and that he fell upon him in the most unexpected manner, in a place where he was wholly out of his element. It is inconceivable that the sturdy squire, with his faculty for distributing "Flicks" and "Dowses,"—who came so valiantly to the aid of Jones in his battle-royal with Blifil and Thwackum,—was likely, under any but very exceptional circumstances, to be dismayed by a cane. It was the exceptional character of the assault which made a coward of him; and Fielding, who had the keenest eye for inconsistencies of the kind, knew perfectly well what he was doing.

Of the remaining *dramatis personæ*—the swarming individualities with which the great comic epic is literally "all alive," as Lord Monboddo said—it is impossible to give any adequate account. Few of them, if any, are open to the objection already pointed out with respect to Allworthy and the younger Blifil, and most of them bear signs of having been closely copied from living models. Parson Thwackum, with his Antinomian doctrines, his bigotry, and his pedagogic notions of justice; Square the philosopher, with his faith in human virtue (alas! poor Square), and his cuckoo-cry about "the unalterable Rule of Right and the eternal Fitness of Things;" Par-

germ of his character be derived from Addison's Tory Foxhunter or not, it is certain that Fielding must have had superabundant material of his own from which to model this thoroughly representative, and at the same time, completely individual character. Western has all the rustic tastes, the narrow prejudices, the imperfect education, the unreasoning hatred to the court, which distinguished the Jacobite country gentleman of the Georgian era; but his divided love for his daughter and his horses, his good-humour and his shrewdness, his foaming impulses and his quick subsidings, his tears, his oaths, and his barbaric dialect, are all essential features in a personal portrait. When Jones has rescued Sophia, he will give him all his stable, the Chevalier and Miss Slouch excepted; when he finds he is in love with her, he is in a frenzy to "get at un" and "spoil his Caterwauling." He will have the surgeon's heart's blood if he takes a drop too much from Sophia's white arm; when she opposes his wishes as to Bliffl, he will turn her into the street with no more than a smock, and give his estate to the "*sinking* Fund." Throughout the book he is *qualis ab incepto*,—boisterous, brutal, jovial, and inimitable; so that when finally in "Chapter the Last," we get that pretty picture of him in Sophy's nursery, protesting that the tattling of his little granddaughter is "sweeter Music than the finest Cry of Dogs in *England*," we part with him almost with a feeling of esteem. Scott seems to have thought it unreasonable that he should have "taken a beating so unresistingly from the friend of Lord Fellamar," and even hints that the passage is an interpolation, although he wisely refrains from suggesting by whom, and should have known that

it was in the first edition. With all deference to so eminent an authority, it is impossible to share his hesitation. Fielding was fully aware that even the bravest have their fits of panic. It must besides be remembered that Lord Fellamar's friend was not an effeminate dandy, but a military man—probably a professed *sabreur*, if not a salaried bully like Captain Stab in the *Rake's Progress*; that he was armed with a stick and Western was not; and that he fell upon him in the most unexpected manner, in a place where he was wholly out of his element. It is inconceivable that the sturdy squire, with his faculty for distributing "Flicks" and "Dowses,"—who came so valiantly to the aid of Jones in his battle-royal with Blifil and Thwackum,—was likely, under any but very exceptional circumstances, to be dismayed by a cane. It was the exceptional character of the assault which made a coward of him; and Fielding, who had the keenest eye for inconsistencies of the kind, knew perfectly well what he was doing.

Of the remaining *dramatis personæ*—the swarming individualities with which the great comic epic is literally "all alive," as Lord Monboddo said—it is impossible to give any adequate account. Few of them, if any, are open to the objection already pointed out with respect to Allworthy and the younger Blifil, and most of them bear signs of having been closely copied from living models. Parson Thwackum, with his Antinomian doctrines, his bigotry, and his pedagogic notions of justice; Square the philosopher, with his faith in human virtue (alas! poor Square), and his cuckoo-cry about "the unalterable Rule of Right and the eternal Fitness of Things;" Par-

tridge—the unapproachable Partridge,—with his superstition, his vanity, and his perpetual *Infandum regina*, but who, notwithstanding all his cheap Latinity, cannot construe an unexpected phrase of Horace; Ensign Northerton, with his vague and disrespectful recollections of “Homo;” young Nightingale and Parson Supple:—each is a definite character bearing upon his forehead the mark of his absolute fidelity to human nature. Nor are the female actors less accurately conceived. Starched Miss Bridget Allworthy, with her pinched Hogarthian face; Miss Western, with her disjointed diplomatic jargon; that budding Slipslop, Mrs. Honour; worthy Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Fitzpatrick, Mrs. Waters, Lady Bellaston,—all are to the full as real. Lady Bellaston especially, deserves more than a word. Like Lady Booby in *Joseph Andrews*, she is not a pleasant character; but the picture of the fashionable demirep, cynical, sensual, and imperious, has never been drawn more vigorously, or more completely—even by Balzac. Lastly, there is the adorable Sophia herself, whose pardon should be asked for naming her in such close proximity to her frailer sister. Byron calls her (perhaps with a slight suspicion of exigence of rhyme) too “*emphatic*,” meaning, apparently, to refer to such passages as her conversation with Mrs. Fitzpatrick, etc. But the heroine of Fielding’s time—a time which made merry over a lady’s misadventures in horsemanship, and subjected her to such atrocities as those of Lord Fellamar—required to be strongly moulded; and Sophia Western is pure and womanly, in spite of her unfavourable surroundings. She is a charming example—the first of her race—of an unsentimentalised flesh-and-blood heroine; and Time



has bated no jot of her frank vitality or her healthy beauty. Her descendants in the modern novel are far more numerous than the family which she bore to the fortunate—the too fortunate—Mr. Jones.

And this reminds us that in the foregoing enumeration we have left out Hamlet. In truth, it is by no means easy to speak of this handsome, but very unheroic hero. Lady Mary, employing, curiously enough, the very phrase which Fielding has made one of his characters apply to Jones, goes so far as to call him a "sorry scoundrel;" and eminent critics have dilated upon his fondness for drink and play. But it is a notable instance of the way in which preconceived attributes are gradually attached to certain characters, that there is in reality little or nothing to show that he was either sot or gamester. With one exception, when, in the joy of his heart at his benefactor's recovery, he takes too much wine (and it may be noted that on the same occasion the Catonic Thwackum drinks considerably more), there is no evidence that he was specially given to tippling, even in an age of hard drinkers, while of his gambling there is absolutely no trace at all. On the other hand, he is admittedly brave, generous, chivalrous, kind to the poor, and courteous to women. What, then, is his cardinal defect? The answer lies in the fact that Fielding, following the doctrine laid down in his initial chapters, has depicted him under certain conditions (in which, it is material to note, he is always rather the tempted than the tempter), with an unvarnished truthfulness which to the pure-minded is repugnant, and to the prurient indecent. Remembering that he too had been young, and reproducing, it may be, his own experiences,



he exhibits his youth as he had found him—a “piebald miscellany,”—

“Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire;”

and, to our modern ideas, when no one dares, as Thackeray complained, “to depict to his utmost power a Man,” the spectacle is discomfiting. Yet those who look upon human nature as keenly and unflinchingly as Fielding did, knowing how weak and fallible it is,—how prone to fall away by accident or passion,—can scarcely deny the truth of Tom Jones. That such a person cannot properly serve as a hero now is rather a question of our time than of Fielding’s, and it may safely be set aside. One objection which has been made, and made with reason, is that Fielding, while taking care that Nemesis shall follow his hero’s lapses, has spoken of them with too much indulgence, or rather without sufficient excuse. Coleridge, who was certainly not squeamish, seems to have felt this when, in a MS. note<sup>1</sup> in the well-known British Museum edition, he says :—

“Even in this most questionable part of Tom Jones [*i.e.* the Lady Bellaston episode, chap. ix. Book xv.], I cannot but think after frequent reflection on it, that an additional paragraph, more fully & forcibly unfolding Tom Jones’s sense of self-degradation on the discovery of the true character of the relation, in which he had stood to Lady Bellaston—and his awakened feeling of the dignity and manliness of Chastity—would have removed in great measure any just objection, at all events relating to Fielding himself, by taking in the state of manners in his time.”

<sup>1</sup> These notes were communicated by Mr. James Gillman to *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, published by H. N. Coleridge in 1836. The book in which they were made, (it is the four volume edition of 1773, and has Gillman’s book-plate), is now in the British Museum. The above transcript is from the MS.

Another point suggested by these last lines may be touched *en passant*. Lady Bellaston, as Fielding has carefully explained (chap. i. Book xiv.), was not a typical, but an exceptional, member of society; and although there were eighteenth-century precedents for such alliances (*e.g.* Miss Edwards and Lord Anne Hamilton, Mrs. Upton and General Braddock,) it is a question whether in a picture of average English life it was necessary to deal with exceptions of this kind, or, at all events, to exemplify them in the principal personage. But the discussion of this subject would prove endless. Right or wrong, Fielding has certainly suffered in popularity for his candour in this respect, since one of the wisest and wittiest books ever written cannot, without hesitation, be now placed in the hands of women or very young people. Moreover, this same candour has undoubtedly attracted to its pages many, neither young nor women, whom its wit finds unintelligent, and its wisdom leaves unconcerned.

But what a brave wit it is, what a wisdom after all, that is contained in this wonderful novel! Where shall we find its like for richness of reflection—for inexhaustible good-humour—for large and liberal humanity! Like Fontenelle, Fielding might fairly claim that he had never cast the smallest ridicule upon the most infinitesimal of virtues; it is against hypocrisy, affectation, insincerity of all kinds, that he wages war. And what a keen and searching observation,—what a perpetual faculty of surprise,—what an endless variety of method! Take the chapter headed ironically *A Receipt to regain the lost Affections of a Wife*, in which Captain John Blifil gives so striking an example of Mr. Samuel Johnson's just pub-

lished *Vanity of Human Wishes*, by dying suddenly of apoplexy while he is considering what he will do with Mr. Allworthy's property (when it reverts to him); or that admirable scene, commended by Macaulay, of Partridge at the Playhouse, which is none the worse because it has just a slight look of kinship with that other famous visit which Sir Roger de Coverley paid to Philips's *Distrest Mother*. Or take again, as utterly unlike either of these, that burlesque Homeric battle in the churchyard, where the "sweetly-winding Stour" stands for "reedy Simois," and the bumpkins round for Greeks and Trojans! Or take yet once more, though it is woful work to offer bricks from this edifice which *has* already (in a sense) outlived the Escorial,<sup>1</sup> the still more diverse passage which depicts the changing conflict in Black George's mind as to whether he shall return to Jones the sixteen guineas that he has found:—

"*Black George* having received the Purse, set forward towards the Alehouse; but in the Way a Thought occurred whether he should not detain this Money likewise. His Conscience, however, immediately started at this Suggestion, and began to upbraid him with Ingratitude to his Benefactor. To this his Avarice answered, 'That his conscience should have considered that Matter before, when he deprived poor *Jones* of his 500*l*. That having quietly acquiesced in what was of so much greater Importance, it was absurd, if not downright Hypocrisy, to affect any Qualms at this Trifle.'—In return to which, Conscience, like a good Lawyer, attempted to distinguish between an absolute Breach of Trust, as here where the Goods were delivered, and a bare Concealment of what was found, as in the former Case. Avarice presently treated this with Ridicule, called it a Distinction without a Difference, and absolutely insisted, that when once all Pre-

<sup>1</sup> The Escorial, it will be remembered, was partially burned in 1872.

tensions of Honour and Virtue were given up in any one Instance, that there was no Precedent for resorting to them upon a second Occasion. In short, poor Conscience had certainly been defeated in the Argument, had not Fear stepped in to her Assistance, and very strenuously urged, that the real Distinction between the two Actions, did not lie in the different degrees of Honour, but of Safety: For that the secret-ing the 500l. was a Matter of very little Hazard; whereas the detaining the sixteen Guineas was liable to the utmost Danger of Discovery.

"By this friendly Aid of Fear, Conscience obtained a compleat Victory in the Mind of *Black George*, and after making him a few Compliments on his Honesty, forced him to deliver the Money to *Jones*."

When one remembers that this is but one of many such passages, and that the book, notwithstanding the indulgence claimed by the author in the Preface, and despite a certain hurry at the close, is singularly even in its workmanship, it certainly increases our respect for the manly genius of the writer, who, amid all the distractions of ill-health and poverty, could find the courage to pursue and perfect such a conception. It is true that both Cervantes and Bunyan wrote their immortal works in the confinement of a prison. But they must at least have enjoyed the seclusion so needful to literary labour; while *Tom Jones* was written here and there, at all times and in all places, with the dun at the door and the wolf not very far from the gate.<sup>1</sup>

The little sentence quoted some pages back from Walpole's letters is sufficient proof, if proof were needed, of its immediate success. Andrew Millar was shrewd

<sup>1</sup> Salisbury, in the neighbourhood of which *Tom Jones* is laid, claims the originals of some of the characters. Thwackum is said to have been Hele, a schoolmaster; Square, one Chubb, a Deist; and Dowling the lawyer a person named Stillingfleet.



enough, despite his constitutional confusion, and he is not likely to have given an additional £100 to the author of any book without good reason. But the indications of that success are not very plainly impressed upon the public prints. The *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1749, which, as might be expected from Johnson's connection with it, contains ample accounts of his own tragedy of *Irene* and Richardson's recently-published *Clarissa*, has no notice of *Tom Jones*, nor is there even any advertisement of the second edition issued in the same year. But, in the emblematic frontispiece, it appears under *Clarissa* (and sharing with that work a possibly unintended proximity to a sprig of laurel stuck in a bottle of Nantes), among a pile of the books of the year; and in the "poetical essays" for August, one Thomas Cawthorn breaks into rhymed panegyric. "Sick of her fools," sings this enthusiastic but scarcely lucid admirer—

"Sick of her fools, great *Nature* broke the jest,  
And *Truth* held out each character to test,  
When *Genius* spoke: Let *Fielding* take the pen!  
Life dropt her mask, and all mankind were men."

There were others, however, who would scarcely have echoed the laudatory sentiments of Mr. Cawthorn. Among these was again the excellent Richardson, who seems to have been wholly unpropitiated by the olive branch held out to him in the *Jacobite's Journal*. His vexation at the indignity put upon *Pamela* by *Joseph Andrews* was now complicated by a twittering jealousy of the "spurious brat," as he obligingly called *Tom Jones*, whose success had been so "unaccountable." In these circumstances, some of the letters of his correspondents



must have been gall and wormwood to him. Lady Bradshaigh, for instance, under her *nom de guerre* of "Bel-four," tells him that she is fatigued with the very name of the book, having met several young ladies who were for ever talking of their Tom Jones's, "for so they call their favourites," and that the gentlemen, on their side, had their Sophias, one having gone so far as to give that all-popular name to his "Dutch mastiff puppy." But perhaps the best and freshest exhibition (for, as far as can be ascertained, it has never hitherto been made public) of Richardson's attitude to his rival is to be found in a little group of letters in the Forster collection at South Kensington. The writers are Aaron Hill and his daughters; but the letters do not seem to have been known to Mrs. Barbauld, whose last communication from Hill is dated November 2, 1748. Nor are they to be found in Hill's own Correspondence. The ladies, it appears, had visited Richardson at Salisbury Court in 1741, and were great admirers of *Pamela*, and the "divine *Clarissa*." Some months after *Tom Jones* was published, Richardson (not yet having brought himself to read the book) had asked them to do so, and give him their opinion as to its merits. Thereupon Minerva and Astræa, who despite their names, and their description of themselves as "Girls of an untittering Disposition," must have been very bright and lively young persons, began seriously "to lay their two wise heads together" and "hazard this Discovery of their Emptiness." Having "with much ado got over some Reluctance, that was bred by a familiar coarseness in the *Title*," they report "much (masqu'd) merit" in the "whole six volumes"—"a double merit, both of Head, and Heart."

Had it been the latter only it would be more worthy of Mr. Richardson's perusal; but, say these considerate pioneers, if he does spare it his attention, he must only do so at his leisure, for the author "introduces All his Sections (and too often interweaves the *serious* Body of his meanings), with long Runs of bantering Levity, which his [Fielding's] Good sense may suffer by Effect of." "It is true (they continue), he seems to wear this Lightness, as a grave Head sometime wears a *Feather*: which tho' He and Fashion may consider as an ornament, Reflection will condemn, as a Disguise, and *covering*." Then follows a brief excursus, intended for their correspondent's special consolation, upon the folly of treating grave things lightly; and with delightful sententiousness the letter thus concludes:—

"Mean while, it is an honest pleasure, which we take in adding, that (exclusive of one wild, detach'd, and independent Story of a *Man of the Hill*, that neither brings on Anything, nor rose from Anything that went before it) All the changefull windings of the Author's Fancy carry on a course of regular Design; and end in an extremely moving Close, where Lives that seem'd to wander and run different ways, meet, All, in an instructive Center.

"The whole Piece consists of an inventive Race of Disappointments and Recoveries. It excites Curiosity, and holds it watchful. It has just and pointed Satire; but it is a partial Satire, and confin'd, too narrowly: It sacrifices to Authority, and Interest. Its *Events* reward Sincerity, and punish and expose Hypocrisy; shew Pity and Benevolence in amiable Lights, and Avarice and Brutality in very despicable ones. In every Part It has Humanity for its Intention: In too many, it *seems* wantoner than It was meant to be: It has bold shocking Pictures; and (I fear)<sup>1</sup> not unressembling ones, in high Life, and in low. And (to conclude this too adven-

<sup>1</sup> The "pen-holder" is the fair Astræa.

turous Guess-work, from a Pair of forward Baggages) would, every where, (we think,) *deserve* to please,—if stript of what the Author thought himself most sure to *please* by.

“And thus, Sir, we have told you our sincere opinion of *Tom Jones*. . . .

“Your most profest Admirers and most humble Servants,

“Astræa  
and  
Minerva } Hill.

“PLAISTOW the 27th of July 1749.”

Richardson's reply to this ingenuous criticism is dated the 4th of August. His requesting two young women to study and criticise a book which he has heard strongly condemned as immoral,—his own obvious familiarity with what he has not read but does not scruple to censure,—his transparently jealous anticipation of its author's ability,—all this forms a picture so characteristic alike of the man and the time that no apology is needed for the following textual extract :—

“I must confess, that I have been prejudiced by the Opinion of Several judicious Friends against the truly coarse-titled *Tom Jones* ; and so have been discouraged from reading it.—I was told, that it was a rambling Collection of Waking Dreams, in which Probability was not observed : And that it had a very bad Tendency. And I had Reason to think that the Author intended for his Second View (His *first*, to fill his Pocket, by accommodating it to the reigning Taste) in writing it, to whiten a vicious Character, and to make Morality bend to his Practices: What Reason had he to make his *Tom* illegitimate, in an Age where Keeping is become a Fashion ? Why did he make him a common—What shall I call it ? And a Kept Fellow, the Lowest of all Fellows, yet in Love with a Young Creature who was traping [trapesing ?] after him, a Fugitive from her Father's House ?—Why did he draw his Heroine so fond, so foolish, and so insipid ?—Indeed he has one Excuse—He knows not how to draw a delicate Woman—He has

not been accustomed to such Company,—And is too prescribing, too impetuous, too immoral, I will venture to say, to take any other Byass than that a perverse and crooked Nature has given him ; or Evil Habits, at least, have confirm'd in him. Do Men expect Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles ? But, perhaps, I think the worse of the Piece because I know the Writer, and dislike his Principles both Public and Private, tho' I wish well to the *Man*, and Love Four worthy Sisters of his, with whom I am well acquainted. And indeed should admire him, did he make the Use of his Talents which I wish him to make, For the Vein of Humour, and Ridicule, which he is Master of, might, if properly turned do great Service to y<sup>e</sup> Cause of Virtue.

“But no more of this Gentleman's Work, after I have said, That the favourable Things, you say of the Piece, will tempt me, if I can find Leisure, to give it a Perusal.”

Notwithstanding this last sentence, Richardson more than once reverts to *Tom Jones* before he finishes his letter. Its effect upon Minerva and Astræa is best described in an extract from Aaron Hill's reply, dated seven days later (August the 11th):—

“Unfortunate *Tom Jones*! how sadly has he mortify'd Two sawey Correspondents of your making ! They are with me now : and bid me tell you, You have spoil'd 'em Both, for Criticks.—Shall I add, a Secret which they did not bid me tell you ?—They, Both, fairly cry'd, that You should think it possible they cou'd approve of Any thing, in Any work, that had an *Evil Tendency*, in any Part or Purpose of it. They maintain their Point so far, however, as to be convinc'd they say, that *you* will disapprove this over-rigid Judgment of those Friends, who cou'd not find a Thread of Moral Meaning in *Tom Jones*, quite independent of the Levities they justly censure.—And, as soon as you have Time to read him, for yourself, tis there, pert Sluts, they will be bold enough to rest the Matter.—Mean while, they love and honour you and your opinions.”



To this the author of *Clarissa* replied by writing a long epistle deploring the pain he had given the "dear Ladies," and minutely justifying his foregone conclusions from the expressions they had used. He refers to Fielding again as "a very indelicate, a very impetuous, an unyielding-spirited Man;" and he also trusts to be able to "bestow a Reading" on *Tom Jones*; but by a letter from Lady Bradshaigh, printed in Barbauld, and dated December 1749, it seems that even at that date he had not, or pretended he had not, yet done so. In another of the unpublished South Kensington letters, from a Mr. Solomon Lowe, occurs the following:—"I do not doubt"—says the writer—"but all Europe will ring of it [*Clarissa*]: when a Cracker, that was some thous<sup>d</sup> hours a-composing,<sup>1</sup> will no longer be heard, or talkt-of." Richardson, with business-like precision, has gravely docketed this in his own handwriting,—“Cracker, T. Jones.”

It is unfortunate for Mr. Lowe's reputation as a prophet that, after more than one hundred and thirty years, this ephemeral firework, as he deemed it, should still be sparkling with undiminished brilliancy, and to judge by recent editions, is selling as vigorously as ever. From the days when Lady Mary wrote "*Ne plus ultra*" in her own copy, and La Harpe called it *le premier roman du monde*, (a phrase which, by the way, De Musset applies to *Clarissa*), it has come down to us with an almost universal accompaniment of praise. Gibbon, Byron, Coleridge, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray,—have all left their admiration on record,—to say nothing of professional critics innumerable. As may be seen from the British Museum Catalogue, it has been translated into French,

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Tom Jones*, Book xi. chap. i.



German, Polish, Dutch, and Spanish. Russia and Sweden have also their versions. The first French translation, or rather abridgment, by M. de La Place was prohibited in France (to Richardson's delight) by royal decree, an act which affords another instance, in Scott's words, of that "French delicacy, which, on so many occasions, has strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel" (e.g. the novels of M. Cr billon fils). La Place's edition (1750) was gracefully illustrated with sixteen plates by Hubert Bourguignon, called Gravelot, one of those eighteenth-century illustrators whose designs at present are the rage in Paris. In England, Fielding's best-known pictorial interpreters are Rowlandson and Cruikshank, the latter being by far the more sympathetic. Stothard also prepared some designs for Harrison's *Novelist's Magazine*; but his refined and effeminate pencil was scarcely strong enough for the task. Hogarth alone could have been the ideal illustrator of Henry Fielding; that is to say—if, in lieu of the rude designs he made for *Tristram Shandy*, he could have been induced to undertake the work in the larger fashion of the *Rake's Progress*, or *The Marriage à la Mode*.

As might perhaps be anticipated, *Tom Jones* attracted the dramatist.<sup>1</sup> In 1765, one J. H. Steffens made a comedy of it for the German boards; and in 1785, a M. Desforges based upon it another, called *Tom*

<sup>1</sup> It may be added that it also attracted the plagiarist. As *Pamela* had its sequel in *Pamela's Conduct in High Life*, 1741, so *Tom Jones* was continued in *The History of Tom Jones the Foundling, in his Married State*, a second edition of which was issued in 1750. The Preface announces, needlessly enough, that "Henry Fielding, Esq., is not the Author of this Book." It deserves no serious consideration.

*Jones à Londres*, which was acted at the *Théâtre Français*. It was also turned into a comic opera by Joseph Reed in 1769, and played at Covent Garden. But its most piquant transformation is the *Comédie lyrique* of Poinsinet, acted at Paris in 1765-6 to the lively music of Philidor. The famous Caillot took the part of Squire Western, who, surrounded by *piqueurs*, and girt with the conventional *cor de chasse* of the Gallic sportsman, sings the following *ariette*, diversified with true Fontainebleau terms of venery :—

“ D’un Cerf, dix Cors, j’ai connaissance :  
On l’attaque au fort, on le lance ;  
Tous sont prêts :  
Piqueurs & Valets  
Suivent les pas de l’ami Jone (*sic*).  
J’entends crier : Volcelets, Volcelets.  
Aussitôt j’ordonne  
Que la Meute donne.  
Tayaut, Tayaut, Tayaut.  
Mes chiens découplés l’environnent ;  
Les trompes sonnent :  
‘ Courage, Amis : Tayaut, Tayaut.’  
Quelques chiens, que l’ardeur dérange,  
Quittent la voye & prennent le change  
Jones les rassure d’un cri :  
Ourvari, ourvari.  
Accoute, accoute, accoute.  
Au retour nous en revoyons.  
Accoute, à Mirmiraut, courons  
Tout à Griffaut ;  
Y après : Tayaut, Tayaut.  
On reprend route,  
Voilà le Cerf à l’eau.  
La trompe sonne,  
La Meute donne,  
L’écho résonne,

Nous pressons les nouveaux relais :  
Volcelets, Volcelets,  
L'animal forcé succombe,  
Fait un effort, se relève, enfin tombe :  
Et nos chasseurs chantent tous à l'envi :  
' Amis, goûtons les fruits de la victoire ;  
' Amis, Amis, célébrons notre gloire.  
' Halali, Fanfare, Halali  
' Halali.'"

With this triumphant flourish of trumpets the present chapter may be fittingly concluded.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix No. II. : Fielding and Mrs. Hussey.

## CHAPTER VI.

### JUSTICE LIFE—AMELIA.

In one of Horace Walpole's letters to George Montagu, already quoted, there is a description of Fielding's Bow Street establishment, which has attracted more attention than it deserves. The letter is dated May the 18th, 1749, and the passage (in Cunningham's edition) runs as follows:—

"He [Rigby] and Peter Bathurst<sup>1</sup> t'other night carried a servant of the latter's, who had attempted to shoot him, before Fielding; who, to all his other vocations, has, by the grace of Mr. Lyttelton, added that of Middlesex justice. He sent them word he was at supper, that they must come next morning. They did not understand that freedom, and ran up, where they found him banqueting with a blind man, a whore, and three Irishmen, on some cold mutton and a bone of ham, both in one dish, and the dirtiest cloth. He never stirred nor asked them to sit. Rigby, who had seen him so often come to beg a guinea of Sir C. Williams, and Bathurst, at whose father's he had lived for victuals, understood that dig-

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<sup>1</sup> Probably a son of Peter Bathurst (d. 1748), brother of Pope's friend, Allen, Lord Bathurst. Rigby was the Richard Rigby whose despicable character is familiar in Eighteenth-Century Memoirs. "He died (says Cunningham) involved in debt, with his accounts as Paymaster of the Forces hopelessly unsettled."



nity as little, and pulled themselves chairs ; on which he civilised."

Scott calls this "a humiliating anecdote ;" and both Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Keightley have exhausted rhetoric in the effort to explain it away. As told, it is certainly uncomplimentary ; but considerable deductions must be made, both for the attitude of the narrator and the occasion of the narrative. Walpole's championship of his friends was notorious ; and his absolute injustice, when his partisan spirit was uppermost, is everywhere patent to the readers of his Letters. In the present case he was not of the encroaching party ; and he speaks from hearsay solely. But his friends had, in his opinion, been outraged by a man, who, according to his ideas of fitness, should have come to them cap in hand ; and as a natural consequence, the story, no doubt exaggerated when it reached him, loses nothing under his transforming and malicious pen. Stripped of its decorative flippancy, however, there remains but little that can really be regarded as "humiliating." Scott himself suggests, what is most unquestionably the case, that the blind man was the novelist's half-brother, afterwards Sir John Fielding ; and it is extremely unlikely that the lady so discourteously characterised could have been any other than his wife, who, Lady Stuart tells us, "had few personal charms." There remain the "three Irishmen," who may, or may not, have been perfectly presentable members of society. At all events, their mere nationality, so rapidly decided upon, cannot be regarded as a stigma. That the company and entertainment were scarcely calculated to suit the superfine standard of Mr. Bathurst and Mr. Rigby may perhaps be conceded. Fielding was by no means a

rich man, and in his chequered career had possibly grown indifferent to minor decencies. Moreover, we are told by Murphy that, as a Westminster justice, he "kept his table open to those who had been his friends when young, and had impaired their own fortunes." Thus, it must always have been a more or less ragged regiment who met about that kindly Bow Street board; but that the fact reflects upon either the host or guests cannot be admitted for a moment. If the anecdote is discreditable to anyone it is to that facile retailer of *ana* and incorrigible society-gossip, Mr. Horace Walpole.

But while these unflattering tales were told of his private life, Fielding was fast becoming eminent in his public capacity. On the 12th of May 1749 he was unanimously chosen chairman of Quarter Sessions at Hicks's Hall (as the Clerkenwell Sessions House was then called); and on the 29th of June following he delivered a charge to the Westminster Grand Jury which is usually printed with his works, and which is still regarded by lawyers as a model exposition. It is at first a little unexpected to read his impressive and earnest denunciations of masquerades and theatres (in which latter, by the way, one Samuel Foote had very recently been following the example of the author of *Pasquin*); but Fielding the magistrate and Fielding the playwright were two different persons; and a long interval of changeful experience lay between them. In another part of his charge, which deals with the offence of libelling, it is possible that his very vigorous appeal was not the less forcible by reason of the personal attacks to which he had referred in the Preface to *David Simple*, the *Jacobite's Journal*, and elsewhere. His only other literary efforts

during this year appear to have been a little pamphlet entitled *A True State of the Case of Bosavern Penlez*; and a formal congratulatory letter to Lyttelton upon his second marriage, in which, while speaking gratefully of his own obligations to his friend, he endeavours to enlist his sympathies for Moore the fabulist who was also "about to marry." The pamphlet had reference to an occurrence which took place in July. Three sailors of the "Grafton" man-of-war had been robbed in a house of ill fame in the Strand. Failing to obtain redress, they attacked the house with their comrades, and wrecked it, causing a "dangerous riot," to which Fielding makes incidental reference in one of his letters to the Duke of Bedford, and which was witnessed by John Byrom, the poet and stenographer, in whose *Remains* it is described. Bosavern Penlez or Pen Lez, who had joined the crowd, and in whose possession some of the stolen property was found, was tried and hanged in September. His sentence, which was considered extremely severe, excited much controversy, and the object of Fielding's pamphlet was to vindicate the justice and necessity of his conviction.

Towards the close of 1749 Fielding fell seriously ill with fever aggravated by gout. It was indeed at one time reported that mortification had supervened; but under the care of Dr. Thomson, that dubious practitioner whose treatment of Winnington in 1746 had given rise to so much paper war, he recovered; and during 1750 was actively employed in his magisterial duties. At this period lawlessness and violence appear to have prevailed to an unusual extent in the metropolis, and the office of a Bow Street justice was no sinecure. Reform of some kind was felt on all sides to be urgently

required; and Fielding threw his two years' experience and his deductions therefrom into the form of a pamphlet entitled *An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers, etc., with some Proposals for remedying this growing Evil*. It was dedicated to the then Lord High Chancellor, Philip Yorke, Lord Hardwicke, by whom, as well as by more recent legal authorities, it was highly appreciated. Like the *Charge to the Grand Jury*, it is a grave argumentative document, dealing seriously with luxury, drunkenness, gaming, and other prevalent vices. Once only, in an ironical passage respecting beaux and fine ladies, does the author remind us of the author of *Tom Jones*. As a rule, he is weighty, practical, and learned in the law. Against the curse of Gin-drinking, which, owing to the facilities for obtaining that liquor, had increased to an alarming extent among the poorer classes, he is especially urgent and energetic. He points out that it is not only making dreadful havoc in the present, but that it is enfeebling the race of the future, and he concludes—

“Some little Care on this Head is surely necessary: For tho' the Encrease of Thieves, and the Destruction of Morality; though the Loss of our Labourers, our Sailors, and our Soldiers, should not be sufficient Reasons, there is one which seems to be unanswerable, and that is, the Loss of our Gin-drinkers: Since, should the drinking this Poison be continued in its present Height during the next twenty Years, there will, by that Time, be very few of the common People left to drink it.”

To the appeal thus made by Fielding in January 1751, Hogarth added his pictorial protest in the following month by his awful plate of *Gin Lane*, which, if not actually prompted by his friend's words, was certainly



inspired by the same crying evil. One good result of these efforts was the "Bill for restricting the Sale of Spirituous Liquors," to which the royal assent was given in June, and Fielding's connection with this enactment is practically acknowledged by Horace Walpole in his *Memoires of the Last ten Years of the Reign of George II.* The law was not wholly effectual, and was difficult to enforce; but it was not by any means without its good effects.<sup>1</sup>

Between the publication of the *Enquiry* and that of *Amelia* there is nothing of importance to chronicle except Fielding's connection with one of the events of 1751, the discovery of the Glastonbury waters. According to the account given in the *Gentleman's* for July in that year, a certain Matthew Chancellor had been cured of "an asthma and phthisic" of thirty years' standing by drinking from a spring near Chain Gate, Glastonbury, to which he had (so he alleged) been directed in a dream. The spring forthwith became famous; and in May an entry in the *Historical Chronicle* for Sunday, the 5th, records that above 10,000 persons had visited it, deserting Bristol, Bath, and other popular resorts. Numerous pamphlets

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. R. Hurd, afterwards Bishop of Worcester, an upright and scholarly, but formal and censorious man, whom Johnson called a "word-picker," and franker contemporaries "an old maid in breeches," has left a reference to Fielding at this time which is not flattering. "I dined with him [Ralph Allen] yesterday, where I met Mr. Fielding,—a poor emaciated, worn-out rake, whose gout and infirmities have got the better even of his buffoonery" (Letter to Balguy, dated "Inner Temple, 19th March, 1751.") That Fielding had not long before been dangerously ill, and that he was a martyr to gout, is fact: the rest is probably no more than the echo of a foregone conclusion, based upon report, or dislike to his works. Hurd praised Richardson and proscribed Sterne. He must have been wholly out of sympathy with the author of *Tom Jones*.

were published for and against the new waters; and a letter in their favour, which appeared in the *London Daily Advertiser* for the 31st August, signed "Z. Z.," is "supposed to be wrote" by "J—e F—g." Fielding was, as may be remembered, a Somersetshire man, Sharp-ham Park, his birthplace, being about three miles from Glastonbury; and he testifies to the "wonderful Effects of this salubrious Spring" in words which show that he had himself experienced them. "Having seen great Numbers of my Fellow Creatures under two of the most miserable Diseases human Nature can labour under, the Asthma and Evil, return from *Glastonbury* blessed with the Return of Health, and having myself been relieved from a Disorder which baffled the most skilful Physicians," justice to mankind (he says) obliges him to take notice of the subject. The letter is interesting, more as showing that, at this time, Fielding's health was broken, than as proving the efficacy of the cure; for, whatever temporary relief the waters afforded, it is clear (as Mr. Lawrence pertinently remarks) that he derived no permanent benefit from them. They must, however, have continued to attract visitors, as a pump-room was opened in August 1753; and, although they have now fallen into disuse, they were popular for many years.

But a more important occurrence than the discovery of the Somersetshire spring is a little announcement contained in Sylvanus Urban's list of publications for December 1751, No. 17 of which is "*Amelia*, in 4 books, 12mo; by Henry Fielding, Esq." The publisher, of course, was Andrew Millar; and the actual day of issue, as appears from the *General Advertiser*, was December the 19th, although the title-page, by anticipation, bore the

date of 1752. There were two mottoes, one of which was the appropriate—

*"Felices ter & amplius  
Quos irrupta tenet Copula;"*

and the dedication, brief and simply expressed, was to Ralph Allen. As before, the "artful aid" of advertisement was invoked to whet the public appetite.

"To satisfy the earnest Demand of the Publick (says Millar), this Work has been printed at four Presses; but the Proprietor notwithstanding finds it impossible to get them (*sic*) bound in Time, without spoiling the Beauty of the Impression, and therefore will sell them sew'd at Half-a-Guinea."

This was open enough; but, according to Scott, Millar adopted a second expedient to assist *Amelia* with the booksellers.

"He had paid a thousand pounds for the copyright; and when he began to suspect that the work would be judged inferior to its predecessor, he employed the following stratagem to push it upon the trade. At a sale made to the booksellers, previous to the publication, Millar offered his friends his other publications on the usual terms of discount; but when he came to *Amelia*, he laid it aside, as a work expected to be in such demand, that he could not afford to deliver it to the trade in the usual manner. The *ruse* succeeded—the impression was anxiously bought up, and the bookseller relieved from every apprehension of a slow sale."

There were several reasons why—superficially speaking—*Amelia* should be "judged inferior to its predecessor." That it succeeded *Tom Jones* after an interval of little more than two years and eight months would be an important element in the comparison, if it were known at all definitely what period was occupied in writing *Tom Jones*. All that can be affirmed is that Fielding must have

been far more at leisure when he composed the earlier work than he could possibly have been when filling the office of a Bow Street magistrate. But, in reality, there is a much better explanation of the superiority of *Tom Jones* to *Amelia* than the merely empirical one of the time it took. *Tom Jones*, it has been admirably said by a French critic, "*est la condensation et le résumé de toute une existence. C'est le résultat et la conclusion de plusieurs années de passions et de pensées, la formule dernière et complète de la philosophie personnelle que l'on s'est faite sur tout ce que l'on a vu et senti.*" Such an experiment, argues Planché, is not twice repeated in a lifetime: the soil which produced so rich a crop can but yield a poorer aftermath. Behind *Tom Jones* there was the author's ebullient youth and manhood; behind *Amelia* but a section of his graver middle-age. There are other reasons for diversity in the manner of the book itself. The absence of the initial chapters, which gave so much variety to *Tom Jones*, tends to heighten the sense of impatience which, it must be confessed, occasionally creeps over the reader of *Amelia*, especially in those parts where, like Dickens at a later period, Fielding delays the progress of his narrative for the discussion of social problems and popular grievances. However laudable the desire (expressed in the dedication) "to expose some of the most glaring Evils, as well public as private, which at present infest this Country," the result in *Amelia*, from an art point of view, is as unsatisfactory as that of certain well-known pages of *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*. Again, there is a marked change in the attitude of the author,—a change not wholly reconcilable with the brief period which separates the two novels. However it may have chanced, whether from failing health



or otherwise, the Fielding of *Amelia* is suddenly a far older man than the Fielding of *Tom Jones*. The robust and irrepressible vitality, the full-veined delight of living, the energy of observation and strength of satire, which characterise the one give place in the other to a calmer retrospection, a more compassionate humanity, a gentler and more benignant criticism of life. That, as some have contended, *Amelia* shows an intellectual falling-off cannot for a moment be admitted, least of all upon the ground—as even so staunch an admirer as Mr. Keightley has allowed himself to believe—that certain of its incidents are obviously repeated from the *Modern Husband* and others of the author's plays. At this rate *Tom Jones* might be judged inferior to *Joseph Andrews*, because the Political Apothecary in the "Man of the Hill's" story has his prototype in the *Coffee-House Politician*, whose original is Addison's Upholsterer. The plain fact is, that Fielding recognised the failure of his plays as literature; he regarded them as dead; and freely transplanted what was good of his forgotten work into the work which he hoped would live. In this, it may be, there was something of indolence or haste; but assuredly there was no proof of declining powers.

If, for the sake of comparison, *Tom Jones* may be described as an animated and happily-constructed comedy, with more than the usual allowance of first-rate characters, *Amelia* must be regarded as a one-part piece, in which the rest of the *dramatis personæ* are wholly subordinate to the central figure. Captain Booth, the two Colonels, Atkinson and his wife, Miss Matthews, Dr. Harrison, Trent, the shadowy and maleficent "My Lord," are all less active on their own account than energised

and set in motion by Amelia. Round her they revolve; from her they obtain their impulse and their orbit. The best of the men, as studies, are Dr. Harrison and Colonel Bath. The former, who is as benevolent as Allworthy, is far more human, and it may be added, more humorous in well-doing. He is an individual rather than an abstraction. Bath, with his dignity and gun-cotton honour, is also admirable, but not entirely free from the objection made to some of Dickens's creations, that they are rather characteristics than characters. Captain William Booth, beyond his truth to nature, manifests no qualities that can compensate for his weakness, and the best that can be said of him is, that without it, his wife would have had no opportunity for the display of her magnanimity. There is also a certain want of consistency in his presentment; and when, in the residence of Mr. Bondum the bailiff, he suddenly develops an unexpected scholarship, it is impossible not to suspect that Fielding was unwilling to lose the opportunity of preserving some neglected scenes of the *Author's Farce*. Miss Matthews is a new and remarkable study of the *femme entretenue*, to parallel which, as in the case of Lady Bellaston, we must go to Balzac; Mrs. James, again, is an excellent example of that vapid and colourless nonentity, the "person of condition." Mrs. Bennet, although apparently more contradictory and less intelligible, is nevertheless true to her past history and present environments; while her husband, the sergeant, with his concealed and reverential love for his beautiful foster-sister, has had a long line of descendants in the modern novel. It is upon Amelia, however, that the author has lavished all his pains, and there is no more touching

portrait in the whole of fiction than this heroic and immortal one of feminine goodness and forbearance. It is needless to repeat that it is painted from Fielding's first wife, or to insist that, as Lady Mary was fully persuaded, "several of the incidents he mentions are real matters of fact." That famous scene where Amelia is spreading, for the recreant who is losing his money at the King's Arms, the historic little supper of hashed mutton which she has cooked with her own hands, and denying herself a glass of white wine to save the paltry sum of sixpence, "while her Husband was paying a Debt of several Guineas incurred by the Ace of Trumps being in the Hands of his Adversary"—a scene which it is impossible to read aloud without a certain huskiness in the throat,—the visits to the pawnbroker and the sponging-house, the robbery by the little servant, the encounter at Vauxhall, and some of the pretty vignettes of the children, are no doubt founded on personal recollections. Whether the pursuit to which the heroine is exposed had any foundation in reality it is impossible to say; and there is a passage in Murphy's memoir which almost reads as if it had been penned with the express purpose of anticipating any too harshly literal identification of Booth with Fielding, since we are told of the latter that "though disposed to gallantry by his strong animal spirits, and the vivacity of his passions, he was remarkable for tenderness *and constancy to his wife* [the italics are ours], and the strongest affection for his children." These, however, are questions beside the matter, which is the conception of *Amelia*. That remains, and must remain for ever, in the words of one of Fielding's greatest modern successors, a figure

"wrought with love . . .  
Nought modish in it, pure and noble lines  
Of generous womanhood that fits all time."

There are many women who forgive; but Amelia does more—she not only forgives, but she forgets. The passage in which she exhibits to her contrite husband the letter received long before from Miss Matthews is one of the noblest in literature; and if it had been recorded that Fielding—like Thackeray on a memorable occasion—had here slapped his fist upon the table, and said "*That* is a stroke of genius!" it would scarcely have been a thing to be marvelled at. One final point in connection with her may be noted, which has not always been borne in mind by those who depict good women—much after Hogarth's fashion—without a head. She is not by any means a simpleton, and it is misleading to describe her as a tender, fluttering little creature, who, because she can cook her husband's supper, and caresses him with the obsolete name of Billy, must necessarily be contemptible. On the contrary, she has plenty of ability and good sense, with a fund of humour which enables her to enjoy slyly and even gently satirise the fine lady airs of Mrs. James. Nor is it necessary to contend that her faculties are subordinated to her affections; but rather that conjugal fidelity and Christian charity are inseparable alike from her character and her creed.

As illustrating the tradition that Fielding depicted his first wife in Sophia Western and in Amelia, it has been remarked that there is no formal description of her personal appearance in his last novel, her portrait having already been drawn at length in *Tom Jones*. But the



following depreciatory sketch by Mrs. James is worth quoting, not only because it indirectly conveys the impression of a very handsome woman, but because it is also an admirable specimen of Fielding's lighter manner:—

“In the first place,” cries Mrs. James, “her eyes are too large; and she hath a look with them that I don’t know how to describe; but I know I don’t like it. Then her eyebrows are too large; therefore, indeed, she doth all in her power to remedy this with her pincers; for if it was not for those, her eyebrows would be preposterous.—Then her nose, as well proportioned as it is, has a visible scar on one side.<sup>1</sup>—Her neck likewise is too protuberant for the genteel size, especially as she laces herself; for no woman, in my opinion, can be genteel who is not entirely flat before. And lastly, she is both too short, and too tall.—Well, you may laugh, Mr. James, I know what I mean, though I cannot well express it. I mean, that she is too tall for a pretty woman, and too short for a fine woman.—There is such a thing as a kind of insipid medium—a kind of something that is neither one thing or another. I know not how to express it more clearly; but when I say such a one is a pretty woman, a pretty thing, a pretty creature, you know very well I mean a little woman; and when I say such a one is a very fine woman, a very fine person of a woman, to be sure I must mean a tall woman. Now a woman that is between both, is certainly neither the one nor the other.”

The ingenious expedients of Andrew Millar, to which reference has been made, appear to have so far succeeded that a new edition of *Amelia* was called for on the day of publication. Johnson, to whom we owe this story, was thoroughly captivated with the book. Notwithstanding that on another occasion he paradoxically asserted that the author was “a blockhead”—

<sup>1</sup> See note on this subject in chapter iv., and Appendix No. III.

"a barren rascal," he read it through without stopping, and pronounced Mrs. Booth to be "the most pleasing heroine of all the romances." Richardson, on the other hand, found "the characters and situations so wretchedly low and dirty" that he could not get farther than the first volume. With the professional reviewers, a certain Criticulus in the *Gentleman's* excepted, it seems to have fared but ill; and although these adverse verdicts, if they exist, are now more or less inaccessible, Fielding has apparently summarised most of them in a mock-trial of *Amelia* before the "*Court of Censorial Enquiry*," the proceedings of which are recorded in Nos. 7 and 8 of the *Covent-Garden Journal*. The book is indicted upon the Statute of Dulness, and the heroine is charged with being a "*low Character*," a "*Milksop*," and a "*Fool*;" with lack of spirit and fainting too frequently; with dressing her children, cooking and other "*servile Offices*;" with being too forgiving to her husband; and lastly, as may be expected, with the inconsistency, already amply referred to, of being "*a Beauty without a nose*." Dr. Harrison and Colonel Bath are arraigned much in the same fashion. After some evidence against her has been tendered, and "a Great Number of Beaus, Rakes, fine Ladies, and several formal Persons with bushy Wigs, and Canes at their Noses," are preparing to supplement it, a grave man steps forward, and, begging to be heard, delivers what must be regarded as Fielding's final apology for his last novel:—

"If you, Mr. Censor, are yourself a Parent, you will view me with Compassion when I declare I am the Father of this poor Girl the Prisoner at the Bar; nay, when I go further and avow, that of all my Offspring she is my favourite Child.

I can truly say that I bestowed a more than ordinary Pains in her Education ; in which I will venture to affirm, I followed the Rules of all those who are acknowledged to have writ best on the Subject ; and if her Conduct be fairly examined, she will be found to deviate very little from the strictest Observation of all those Rules ; neither Homer nor Virgil pursued them with greater Care than myself, and the candid and learned Reader will see that the latter was the noble model, which I made use of on this Occasion.

"I do not think my Child is entirely free from Faults. I know nothing human that is so ; but surely she doth not deserve the Rancour with which she hath been treated by the Public. However, it is not my Intention, at present, to make any Defence ; but shall submit to a Compromise, which hath been always allowed in this Court in all Prosecutions for Dulness. I do, therefore, solemnly declare to you, Mr. Censor, that I will trouble the World no more with any Children of mine by the same Muse."

Whether sincere or not, this last statement appears to have afforded the greatest gratification to Richardson. "Will I leave you to Captain Booth?" he writes triumphantly to Mrs. Donnellan, in answer to a question she had put to him. "Captain Booth, Madam, has done his own business. Mr. Fielding has over-written himself, or rather *under-written* ; and in his own journal seems ashamed of his last piece ; and has promised that the same Muse shall write no more for him. The piece, in short, is as dead as if it had been published forty years ago, as to sale." There is much to the same effect in the worthy little printer's correspondence ; but enough has been quoted to show how intolerable to the super-sentimental creator of the high-souled and heroic *Clarissa* was his rival's plainer and more practical picture of matronly virtue and modesty. In cases of this kind, *parva seges satis est*, and Amelia has long since outlived

both rival malice and contemporary coldness. It is a proof of her author's genius, that she is even more intelligible to our age than she was to her own.

At the end of the second volume of the first edition of her history was a notice announcing the immediate appearance of the above-mentioned *Covent-Garden Journal*, a bi-weekly paper, in which Fielding, under the style and title of Sir Alexander Drawcansir, assumed the office of Censor of Great Britain. The first number of this new venture was issued on January the 4th, 1752, and the price was threepence. In plan, and general appearance, it resembled the *Jacobite's Journal*, consisting mainly of an introductory Essay, paragraphs of current news, often accompanied by pointed editorial comment, miscellaneous articles, and advertisements. One of the features of the earlier numbers was a burlesque, but not very successful, Journal of the present Paper War, which speedily involved the author in actual hostilities with the notorious quack and adventurer Dr. John Hill, who for some time had been publishing certain impudent lucubrations in the *London Daily Advertiser* under the heading of *The Inspector*; and also with Smollett, whom he (Fielding) had ridiculed in his second number, perhaps on account of that little paragraph in the first edition of *Peregrine Pickle*, to which reference was made in an earlier chapter. Smollett, always irritable and combative, retorted by a needlessly coarse and venomous pamphlet, in which, under the name of "Habbakkuk Hilding, Justice, Dealer and Chapman," Fielding was attacked with indescribable brutality. Another, and seemingly unprovoked, adversary whom the *Journal of the War* brought upon him was Bonnel Thornton, after-



wards joint-author with George Colman of the *Connoisseur*, who, in a production styled *Have at you All*; or, *The Drury Lane Journal*, lampooned Sir Alexander with remarkable rancour and assiduity. Mr. Lawrence has treated these "quarrels of authors" at some length; and they also have some record in the curious collections of the elder Disraeli. As a general rule, Fielding was far less personal and much more scrupulous in his choice of weapons than those who assailed him; but the conflict was an undignified one, and, as Scott has justly said, "neither party would obtain honour by an inquiry into the cause or conduct of its hostilities."

In the enumeration of Fielding's works it is somewhat difficult (if due proportion be observed) to assign any real importance to efforts like the *Covent-Garden Journal*. Compared with his novels, they are insignificant enough. But even the worst work of such a man is notable in its way; and Fielding's contributions to the *Journal* are by no means to be despised. They are shrewd lay sermons, often exhibiting much out-of-the-way erudition, and nearly always distinguished by some of his personal qualities. In No. 33, on "Profanity," there is a character-sketch which, for vigour and vitality, is worthy of his best days; and there is also a very thoughtful paper on "Reading," containing a kindly reference to "the ingenious Author of *Clarissa*," which should have mollified that implacable moralist. In this essay it is curious to notice that, while Fielding speaks with due admiration of Shakespeare and Molière, Lucian, Cervantes, and Swift, he condemns Rabelais and Aristophanes, although in the invocation already quoted from *Tom Jones*, he had included both these

authors among the models he admired. Another paper in the *Covent-Garden Journal* is especially interesting because it affords a clue to a project of Fielding's which unfortunately remained a project. This was a Translation of the works of Lucian, to be undertaken in conjunction with his old colleague, the Rev. William Young. Proposals were advertised, and the enterprise was duly heralded by a "puff preliminary," in which Fielding, while abstaining from anything directly concerning his own abilities, observes, "I will only venture to say, that no Man seems so likely to translate an Author well, as he who hath formed his Stile upon that very Author"—a sentence which, taken in connection with the references to Lucian in *Tom Thumb*, the *Champion* and elsewhere, must be accepted as distinctly autobiographic. The last number of the *Covent-Garden Journal* (No. 72) was issued in November 1752. By this time Sir Alexander seems to have thoroughly wearied of his task. With more gravity than usual he takes leave of letters, begging the Public that they will not henceforth father on him the dulness and scurrility of his worthy contemporaries; "since I solemnly declare that unless in revising my former Works, I have at present no Intention to hold any further Correspondence with the gayer Muses."

The labour of conducting the *Covent-Garden Journal* must have been the more severe in that, during the whole period of its existence, the editor was vigorously carrying out his duties as a magistrate. The prison and political scenes in *Amelia*, which contemporary critics regarded as redundant, and which even to us are more curious than essential, testify at once to his growing

interest in reform, and his keen appreciation of the defects which existed both in the law itself and in the administration of the law; while the numerous cases heard before him, and periodically reported in his paper by his clerk, afford ample evidence of his judicial activity. How completely he regarded himself (Bathurst and Rigby notwithstanding) as the servant of the public, may be gathered from the following regularly repeated notice:—

“To the PUBLIC.

“All Persons who shall for the Future, suffer by Robbers, Burglars, &c., are desired immediately to bring, or send, the best Description they can of such Robbers, &c., with the Time and Place, and Circumstances of the Fact, to Henry Fielding, Esq.; at his House in Bow Street.”

Another instance of his energy in his vocation is to be found in the little collection of cases entitled *Examples of the Interposition of Providence, in the Detection and Punishment of Murder*, published, with Preface and Introduction, in April 1752, and prompted, as advertisement announces, “by the many horrid Murders committed within this last Year.” It appeared, as a matter of fact, only a few days after the execution at Oxford, for parricide, of the notorious Miss Mary Blandy, and might be assumed to have a more or less timely intention; but the purity of Fielding’s purpose is placed beyond a doubt by the fact that he freely distributed it in court to those whom it seemed calculated to profit.

The only other works of Fielding which precede the posthumously published *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* are the *Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor*, etc., a pamphlet dedicated to the Right Honble. Henry Pelham, published in January 1753; and the

*Clear State of the Case of Elizabeth Canning*, published in March. The former, which the hitherto unfriendly *Gentleman's* patronisingly styles an "excellent piece," conceived in a manner which gives "a high idea of his [the author's] present temper, manners and ability," is an elaborate project for the erection, *inter alia*, of a vast building, of which a plan, "drawn by an Eminent Hand," was given, to be called the County-house, capable of containing 5000 inmates, and including work-rooms, prisons, an infirmary, and other features, the details of which are too minute to be repeated in these pages, even if they had received any attention from the Legislature, which they did not. The latter was Fielding's contribution to the extraordinary judicial puzzle, which agitated London in 1753-4. It is needless to do more than recall its outline. On the 29th of January 1753, one Elizabeth Canning, a domestic servant aged eighteen or thereabouts, and who had hitherto borne an excellent character, returned to her mother, having been missing from the house of her master, a carpenter in Aldermanbury, since the 1st of the same month. She was half starved and half clad, and alleged that she had been abducted, and confined during her absence in a house on the Hertford Road, from which she had just escaped. This house she afterwards identified as that of one Mother Wells, a person of very indifferent reputation. An ill-favoured old gipsy woman named Mary Squires was also declared by her to have been the main agent in ill-using and detaining her. The gipsy, it is true, averred that at the time of the occurrence she was a hundred and twenty miles away; but Canning persisted in her statement. Among other people before whom she came was



Fielding, who examined her, as well as a young woman called Virtue Hall, who appeared subsequently as one of Canning's witnesses. Fielding seems to have been strongly impressed by her appearance and her story, and his pamphlet (which was contradicted in every particular by his adversary, John Hill) gives a curious and not very edifying picture of the magisterial procedure of the time. In February, Wells and Squires were tried; Squires was sentenced to death, and Wells to imprisonment and burning in the hand. Then, by the exertions of the Lord Mayor, Sir Crisp Gascoyne, who doubted the justice of the verdict, Squires was respited and pardoned. Forthwith London was split up into Egyptian and Canningite factions; a hailstorm of pamphlets set in; portraits and caricatures of the principal personages were in all the print shops; and, to use Churchill's words,

“—*Betty Canning* was at least,  
With *Gascoyne's* help, a six months feast.”

In April 1754, however, Fate so far prevailed against her that she herself, in turn, was tried for perjury. Thirty-eight witnesses swore that Squires had been in Dorsetshire; twenty-seven that she had been seen in Middlesex. After some hesitation, quite of a piece with the rest of the proceedings, the jury found Canning guilty; and she was transported for seven years. At the end of her sentence she returned to England to receive a legacy of £500, which had been left her by an enthusiastic old lady of Newington-green.<sup>1</sup> Her “case” is full of the most inexplicable contradictions; and it occupies in the *State Trials* some four hundred and twenty closely-printed

pages of the most curious and picturesque eighteenth-century details. But how, from the 1st of January 1753 to the 29th of the same month, Elizabeth Canning really did manage to spend her time is a secret that, to this day, remains undivulged.

<sup>1</sup> So says the *Annual Register* for 1761, p. 179. But according to later accounts (*Gent. Mag.* xliii. 413), she never returned, dying in 1773 at Weathersfield in Connecticut.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE JOURNAL OF A VOYAGE TO LISBON.

IN March 1753, when Fielding published his pamphlet on Elizabeth Canning, his life was plainly drawing to a close. His energies indeed were unabated, as may be gathered from a brief record in the *Gentleman's* for that month, describing his judicial raid, at four in the morning, upon a gaming-room, where he suspected certain highwaymen to be assembled. But his body was enfeebled by disease, and he knew he could not look for length of days. He had lived not long, but much; he had seen in little space, as the motto to *Tom Jones* announced, "the manners of many men;" and now that, prematurely, the inevitable hour approached, he called Cicero and Horace to his aid, and prepared to meet his fate with philosophic fortitude. Between

*"Quem fors dierum cunque dabit, lucro  
Appone,"*

and

*"Grata superveniet, quæ non sperabitur, hora,*

he tells us in his too-little-consulted *Proposal for the Poor*, he had schooled himself to regard events with equanimity, striving above all, in what remained to him of

life, to perform the duties of his office efficiently, and solicitous only for those he must leave behind him. Henceforward his literary efforts should be mainly philanthropic and practical, not without the hope that, if successful, they might be the means of securing some provision for his family. Of fiction he had taken formal leave in the trial of *Amelia*; and of lighter writing generally in the last paper of the *Covent-Garden Journal*. But, if we may trust his Introduction, the amount of work he had done for his poor-law project must have been enormous, for he had read and considered all the laws upon the subject, as well as everything that had been written on it since the days of Elizabeth, yet he speaks nevertheless as one over whose head the sword had all the while been impending:—

“The Attempt, indeed, is such, that the Want of Success can scarce be called a Disappointment, tho’ I shall have lost much Time, and misemployed much Pains; and what is above all, shall miss the Pleasure of thinking that in the Decline of my Health and Life, I have conferred a great and lasting Benefit on my Country.”

In words still more resigned and dignified, he concludes the book:—

His enemies, he says, will no doubt “discover, that instead of intending a Provision for the Poor, I have been carving out one for myself,<sup>1</sup> and have very cunningly projected to build myself a fine House at the Expence of the Public. This would be to act in direct Opposition to the Advice of my above Master [*i.e.* Horace]; it would be indeed

*Struere domos immemor sepulchri.*

Those who do not know me, may believe this; but those

<sup>1</sup> Presumably as Governor of the proposed County-house.



who do, will hardly be so deceived by that Chearfulness which was always natural to me ; and which, I thank God, my Conscience doth not reprove me for, to imagine that I am not sensible of my declining Constitution. . . . Ambition or Avarice can no longer raise a Hope, or dictate any Scheme to me, who have no further Design than to pass my short Remainder of Life in some Degree of Ease, and barely to preserve my Family from being the Objects of any such Laws as I have here proposed."

With the exception of the above, and kindred passages quoted from the Prefaces to the *Miscellanies* and the Plays, the preceding pages, as the reader has no doubt observed, contain little of a purely autobiographical character. Moreover, the anecdotes related of Fielding by Murphy and others have not always been of such a nature as to inspire implicit confidence in their accuracy, while of the very few letters that have been referred to, none have any of those intimate and familiar touches which reveal the individuality of the writer. But from the middle of 1753 up to a short time before his death, Fielding has himself related the story of his life, in one of the most unfeigned and touching little tracts in our own or any other literature. The only thing which, at the moment, suggests itself for comparison with the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* is the letter and dedication which Fielding's predecessor, Cervantes, prefixes to his last romance of *Persiles and Sigismunda*. In each case the words are animated by the same uncomplaining kindness—the same gallant and indomitable spirit ; in each case the writer is a dying man. Cervantes survived the date of his letter to the Conde de Lemos but three days ; and the *Journal*, says Fielding's editor (probably his brother John), was "finished almost at the same

period with life." It was written, from its author's account, in those moments of the voyage when, his womankind being sea-sick, and the crew wholly absorbed in working the ship, he was thrown upon his own resources, and compelled to employ his pen to while away the time. The Preface, and perhaps the Introduction, were added after his arrival at Lisbon, in the brief period before his death. The former is a semi-humorous apology for voyage-writing; the latter gives an account of the circumstances which led to this, his last expedition in search of health.

At the beginning of August 1753, Fielding tells us, having taken the Duke of Portland's medicine<sup>1</sup> for near a year, "the effects of which had been the carrying off the symptoms of a lingering imperfect gout," Mr. Ranby, the King's Sergeant-Surgeon<sup>2</sup> (to whom complimentary reference had been made in the Man of the Hill's story in *Tom Jones*), with other able physicians, advised him "to go immediately to Bath." He accordingly engaged lodgings, and prepared to leave town forthwith. While he was making ready for his departure, and was "almost fatigued to death with several long examinations, relating to five different murders, all committed within the space of a week, by different gangs of street robbers," he received a message from the Duke of Newcastle, afterwards Premier, through that Mr. Carrington whom Walpole calls "the cleverest of all ministerial terriers," requesting his attendance in Lincoln's-Inn

<sup>1</sup> A popular eighteenth-century gout-powder, but as old as Galen. The receipt for it is given in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xxiii., 579.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Ranby was also the friend of Hogarth, who etched his house at Chiswick.

Fields (Newcastle House). Being lame, and greatly over-taxed, Fielding excused himself. But the Duke sent Mr. Carrington again next day, and Fielding with great difficulty obeyed the summons. After waiting some three hours in the antechamber (no unusual feature, as Lord Chesterfield informs us, of the Newcastle audiences), a gentleman was deputed to consult him as to the devising of a plan for putting an immediate end to the murders and robberies which had become so common. This, although the visit cost him "a severe cold," Fielding at once undertook. A proposal was speedily drawn out and submitted to the Privy Council. Its essential features were the employment of a known informer, and the provision of funds for that purpose.

By the time this scheme was finally approved, Fielding's disorder had "turned to a deep jaundice," in which case the Bath waters were generally regarded as "almost infallible." But his eager desire to break up "this gang of villains and cut-throats" delayed him in London; and a day or two after he had received a portion of the stipulated grant, (which portion, it seems, took several weeks in arriving), the whole body were entirely dispersed,— "seven of them were in actual custody, and the rest driven, some out of town, and others out of the kingdom." In examining them, however, and in taking depositions, which often occupied whole days and sometimes nights, although he had the satisfaction of knowing that during the dark months of November and December the metropolis enjoyed complete immunity from murder and robbery, his own health was "reduced to the last extremity."

"Mine (he says) was now no longer what is called a

Bath case," nor, if it had been, could his strength have sustained the "intolerable fatigue" of the journey thither. He accordingly gave up his Bath lodgings, which he had hitherto retained, and went into the country "in a very weak and deplorable condition." He was suffering from jaundice, dropsy, and asthma, under which combination of diseases his body was "so entirely emaciated, that it had lost all its muscular flesh." He had begun with reason "to look on his case as desperate," and might fairly have regarded himself as voluntarily sacrificed to the good of the public. But he is far too honest to assign his action to philanthropy alone. His chief object (he owns) had been, if possible, to secure some provision for his family in the event of his death. Not being a "trading justice,"—that is, a justice who took bribes from suitors, like Justice Thrasher in *Amelia*, or Justice Squeez'um in the *Coffee House Politician*,—his post at Bow Street had scarcely been a lucrative one. "By composing, instead of inflaming, the quarrels of porters and beggars (which I blush when I say hath not been universally practised) and by refusing to take a shilling from a man who most undoubtedly would not have had another left, I had reduced an income of about 500*l* a year of the dirtiest money upon earth to little more than 300*l*, a considerable proportion of which remained with my clerk." Besides the residue of his justice's fees, he had also, he informs us, a yearly pension from the Government, "out of the public service-money," but the amount is not stated. The rest of his means, as far as can be ascertained, were derived from his literary labours. To a man of his lavish disposition, and with the claims of a family upon



him, this could scarcely have been a competence; and if, as appears not very clearly from a note in the *Journal*, he now resigned his office to his half-brother, who had long been his assistant, his private affairs at the beginning of the winter of 1753-54 must, as he says, have "had but a gloomy aspect." In the event of his death his wife and children could have no hope except from some acknowledgment by the Government of his past services.

Meanwhile his diseases were slowly gaining ground. The terrible winter of 1753-54, which, from the weather record in the *Gentleman's*, seems, with small intermission, to have been prolonged far into April, was especially trying to asthmatic patients, and consequently wholly against him. In February he returned to town, and put himself under the care of the notorious Dr. Joshua Ward of Pall Mall, by whom he was treated and tapped for dropsy.<sup>1</sup> He was at his worst, he says, "on that memorable day when the public lost Mr. Pelham (March 6th);" but from this time, he began, under Ward's medicines, to acquire "some little degree of strength," although his dropsy increased. With May came the long-delayed spring, and he moved to Fordhook,<sup>2</sup> a "little house" belonging to him at Ealing, the air of which place then enjoyed a considerable reputation, being reckoned the best in Middlesex,

<sup>1</sup> Ward appears in Hogarth's *Consultation of Physicians*, 1736, and in Pope—"Ward try'd on Puppies, and the Poor, his Drop." He was a quack, but must have possessed considerable ability. Bolingbroke wished Pope to consult him in 1744; and he attended George II. There is an account of him in Nichols's *Genuine Works of Hogarth*, i. 89.

<sup>2</sup> It lay on the Uxbridge Road, a little beyond Acton, and nearly opposite the subsequent site of the Ealing Common Station of the Metropolitan District Railway. The spot is now occupied by "commodious villas."

"and far superior to that of Kensington Gravel-Pits." Here a re-perusal of Bishop Berkeley's *Siris*, which had been recalled to his memory by Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, "the inimitable author of the *Female Quixote*," set him drinking tar-water with apparent good effect, except as far as his chief ailment was concerned. The applications of the trocar became more frequent: the summer, if summer it could be called, was "mouldering away;" and winter, with all its danger to an invalid, was drawing on apace. Nothing seemed hopeful but removal to a warmer climate. Aix in Provence was at first thought of, but the idea was abandoned on account of the difficulties of the journey. Lisbon, where Doddridge had died three years before, was then chosen; a passage in a vessel trading to the port was engaged for the sick man, his wife, daughter, and two servants; and after some delays they started. At this point the actual *Journal* begins with a well-remembered entry:—

"*Wednesday, June 26th, 1754.*—On this day, the most melancholy sun I had ever beheld arose, and found me awake at my house at Fordhook. By the light of this sun, I was, in my own opinion, last to behold and take leave of some of those creatures on whom I doated with a mother-like fondness, guided by nature and passion, and uncured and unhardened by all the doctrine of that philosophical school where I had learnt to bear pains and to despise death.

"In this situation, as I could not conquer nature, I submitted entirely to her, and she made as great a fool of me as she had ever done of any woman whatsoever: under pretence of giving me leave to enjoy, she drew me to suffer the company of my little ones, during eight hours; and I doubt not whether, in that time, I did not undergo more than in all my distemper.

"At twelve precisely my coach was at the door, which was no sooner told me than I kiss'd my children round, and

went into it with some little resolution. My wife, who behaved more like a heroine and philosopher, tho' at the same time the tenderest mother in the world, and my eldest daughter, followed me ; some friends went with us, and others here took their leave ; and I heard my behaviour applauded, with many murmurs and praises to which I well knew I had no title ; as all other such philosophers may, if they have any modesty, confess on the like occasions."

Two hours later the party reached Rotherhithe. Here, with the kindly assistance of his and Hogarth's friend, Mr. Saunders Welch, High Constable of Holborn, the sick man, who, at this time, "had no use of his limbs," was carried to a boat, and hoisted in a chair over the ship's side. This latter journey, far more fatiguing to the sufferer than the twelve miles ride which he had previously undergone, was not rendered more easy to bear by the jests of the watermen and sailors, to whom his ghastly, death-stricken countenance seemed matter for merriment ; and he was greatly rejoiced to find himself safely seated in the cabin. The voyage, however, already more than once deferred, was not yet to begin. Wednesday, being King's Proclamation Day, the vessel could not be cleared at the Custom House ; and on Thursday the skipper announced that he should not set out until Saturday. As Fielding's complaint was again becoming troublesome, and no surgeon was available on board, he sent for his friend, the famous anatomist, Mr. Hunter, of Covent Garden,<sup>1</sup> by whom he was tapped, to his own relief, and the admiration of the simple sea-captain, who (he writes) was greatly impressed by "the heroic constancy, with which I had

<sup>1</sup> This must have been William Hunter, for in 1754 his more distinguished brother John had not yet become celebrated.

borne an operation that is attended with scarce any degree of pain." On Sunday the vessel dropped down to Gravesend, where, on the next day, Mr. Welch, who until then had attended them, took his leave; and, Fielding, relieved by the trocar of any immediate apprehensions of discomfort, might, in spite of his forlorn case, have been fairly at ease. He had a new concern, however, in the state of Mrs. Fielding, who was in agony with toothache, which successive operators failed to relieve; and there is an unconsciously touching little picture of the sick man and his skipper, who was deaf, sitting silently over "a small bowl of punch" in the narrow cabin, for fear of waking the pain-worn sleeper in the adjoining state-room. Of his second wife, as may be gathered from the opening words of the *Journal*, Fielding always speaks with the warmest affection and gratitude. Elsewhere, recording a storm off the Isle of Wight, he says, "My dear wife and child must pardon me, if what I did not conceive to be any great evil to myself, I was not much terrified with the thoughts of happening to them: in truth, I have often thought they are both too good, and too gentle, to be trusted to the power of any man." With what a tenacity of courtesy he treated the whilom Mary Daniel may be gathered from the following vignette of insolence in office, which can be taken as a set-off to the malicious tattletale of Walpole:—

"Soon after their departure [*i.e.* Mr. Welch and a companion], our cabin, where my wife and I were sitting together, was visited by two ruffians, whose appearance greatly corresponded with that of the sheriff's, or rather the knight-marshal's bailiffs. One of these, especially, who seemed to affect a more than ordinary degree of rudeness and insolence,



came in without any kind of ceremony, with a broad gold lace upon his hat, which was cocked with much military fierceness on his head. An inkhorn at his button-hole, and some papers in his hand, sufficiently assured me what he was, and I asked him if he and his companions were not custom-house officers; he answered with sufficient dignity that they were, as an information which he seemed to consider would strike the hearer with awe, and suppress all further inquiry; but on the contrary I proceeded to ask of what rank he was in the Custom house, and receiving an answer from his companion, as I remember, that the gentleman was a riding surveyor; I replied, that he might be a riding surveyor, but could be no gentleman, for that none who had any title to that denomination would break into the presence of a lady, without any apology, or even moving his hat. He then took his covering from his head, and laid it on the table, saying, he asked pardon, and blamed the mate, who should, he said, have informed him if any persons of distinction were below. I told him he might guess from our appearance (which, perhaps, was rather more than could be said with the strictest adherence to truth) that he was before a gentleman and lady, which should teach him to be very civil in his behaviour, tho' we should not happen to be of the number whom the world calls people of fashion and distinction. However, I said, that as he seemed sensible of his error, and had asked pardon, the lady would permit him to put his hat on again, if he chose it. This he refused with some degree of surliness, and failed not to convince me that, if I should condescend to become more gentle, he would soon grow more rude."

The date of this occurrence was July the 1st. On the evening of the same day they weighed anchor and managed to reach the Nore. For more than a week they were wind-bound in the Downs, but on the 11th they anchored off Ryde, from which place, on the next morning, Fielding despatched the following letter to his brother. Besides giving the names of the captain and

the ship, which are carefully suppressed in the *Journal*,<sup>1</sup> it is especially interesting as being the last letter written by Fielding of which we have any knowledge :—

“On board the Queen of Portugal, Rich<sup>d</sup> Veal at anchor on the Mother Bank, off Ryde, to the Care of the Post Master of Portsmouth—this is my Date and y<sup>r</sup> Direction.

July 12 1754.

“Dear Jack, After receiving that agreeable Lre from Mess<sup>rs</sup>. Fielding and Co., we weighed on monday morning and sailed from Deal to the Westward Four Days long but inconceivably pleasant Passage brought us yesterday to an Anchor on the Mother Bank, on the Back of the Isle of Wight, where we had last Night in Safety the Pleasure of hearing the Winds roar over our Heads in as violent a Tempest as I have known, and where my only Consideration were the Fears which must possess any Friend of ours, (if there is happily any such) who really makes our Wellbeing the Object of his Concern especially if such Friend should be totally inexperienced in Sea Affairs. I therefore beg that on the Day you receive this M<sup>rs</sup> Daniel<sup>2</sup> may know that we are just risen from Breakfast in Health and Spirits this twelfth Instant at 9 in the morning. Our Voyage hath proved fruitful in Adventures all which being to be written in the Book, you must postpone y<sup>r</sup> Curiosity As the Incidents which

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<sup>1</sup> Probably this was intentional. Notwithstanding the statement in the “Dedication to the Public” that the text is given “as it came from the hands of the author,” the *Journal*, in the first issue of 1755, seems to have been considerably “edited.” “Mrs. Francis” (the Ryde landlady) is there called “Mrs. Humphrys,” and the portrait of the military coxcomb, together with some particulars of Fielding’s visit to the Duke of Newcastle, and other details, are wholly omitted.

<sup>2</sup> It will be remembered that the maiden-name of Fielding’s second wife, as given in the Register of St. Bene’t’s, was Mary Daniel. “Mrs. Daniel” was therefore, in all probability, Fielding’s mother-in-law; and it may reasonably be assumed that she had remained in charge of the little family at Fordhook.

fall under y<sup>r</sup> Cognizance will possibly be consigned to Oblivion, do give them to us as they pass. Tell y<sup>r</sup> Neighbour I am much obliged to him for recommending me to the Care of a most able and experienced Seaman to whom other Captains seem to pay such Deference that they attend and watch his Motions, and think themselves only safe when they act under his Direction and Example. Our Ship in Truth seems to give Laws on the Water with as much Authority and Superiority as you Dispense Laws to the Public and Examples to y<sup>r</sup> Brethren in Commission. Please to direct y<sup>r</sup> Answer to me on Board as in the Date, if gone to be returned, and then send it by the Post and Pacquet to Lisbon to

“Y<sup>r</sup> affect<sup>d</sup> Brother

“H. FIELDING

“To John Fielding Esq. at his House in  
Bow Street Cov<sup>t</sup> Garden London.”

As the *Queen of Portugal* did not leave Ryde until the 23d, it is possible that Fielding received a reply. During the remainder of this desultory voyage he continued to beguile his solitary hours—hours of which we are left to imagine the physical torture and monotony, for he says but little of himself—by jottings and notes of the, for the most part, trivial accidents of his progress. That happy cheerfulness, of which he spoke in the *Proposal for the Poor*, had not yet deserted him; and there are moments when he seems rather on a pleasure-trip than a forlorn pilgrimage in search of health. At Ryde, where, for change of air, he went ashore, he chronicles, after many discomforts from the most disoblighing of landladies (let the name of Mrs. Francis go down to posterity!), “the best, the pleasantest, and the merriest meal, [in a barn] with more appetite, more real, solid luxury, and more festivity, than was ever seen in an entertainment at White’s.” At

Torbay, he expatiates upon the merits and flavour of the John Dory, a specimen of which "gloriously regaled" the party, and furnished him with a pretext for a dissertation on the London Fish Supply. Another page he devotes to commendation of the excellent *Vinum Pomonæ*, or Southam cyder, supplied by "Mr. Giles Leverance of Cheeshurst, near Dartmouth in Devon," of which, for the sum of five pounds ten shillings, he extravagantly purchases three hogsheads, one for himself, and the others as presents for friends, among whom no doubt was kindly Mr. Welch. Here and there he sketches, with but little abatement of his earlier gaiety and vigour, the human nature around him. Of the objectionable Ryde landlady and her husband there are portraits not much inferior to those of the Tow-wouses in *Joseph Andrews*, while the military fop, who visits his uncle the captain off Spithead, is drawn with all the insight which depicted the vagaries of Ensign Northerton, whom indeed the real hero of the *Journal* not a little resembles. The best character sketch, however, in the whole is that of Captain Richard Veal himself (one almost feels inclined to wonder whether he was in any way related to the worthy lady whose apparition visited Mrs. Bargrave at Canterbury!), but it is of necessity somewhat dispersed. It has also an additional attraction, because, if we remember rightly, it is Fielding's sole excursion into the domain of Smollett. The rough old sea-dog of the Haddock and Vernon period, who had been a privateer; and who still, as skipper of a merchant-man, when he visits a friend or gallants the ladies, decorates himself with a scarlet coat, cockade, and sword; who gives vent to a kind of Irish howl when his favourite kitten is suffocated under a feather bed; and



falls abjectly on his knees when threatened with the dreadful name of Law, is a character which, in its surly good-humour and sensitive dignity, might easily, under more favourable circumstances, have grown into an individuality, if not equal to that of Squire Western, at least on a level with Partridge or Colonel Bath. There are numbers of minute touches—as, for example, his mistaking “a lion” for “Elias” when he reads prayers to the ship’s company; and his quaint asseverations when exercised by the inconstancy of the wind—which show how closely Fielding studied his deaf companion. But it would occupy too large a space to examine the *Journal* more in detail. It is sufficient to say that after some further delays from wind and tide, the travellers sailed up the Tagus. Here, having undergone the usual quarantine and custom-house obstruction, they landed, and Fielding’s penultimate words record a good supper at Lisbon, “for which we were as well charged, as if the bill had been made on the Bath Road, between Newbury and London.” The book ends with a line from the poet whom, in the *Proposal for the Poor*, he had called his master:—

“—*hic finis chartæque viæque.*”

Two months afterwards he died at Lisbon, on the 8th of October, in the forty-eighth year of his age.

He was buried on the hillside in the centre of the beautiful English cemetery, which faces the great Basilica of the Heart of Jesus, otherwise known as the Church of the Estrella. Here, in a leafy spot where the nightingales fill the still air with song, and watched by those secular cypresses from which the place takes its Portuguese name of *Os Cyprestes*, lies all that was mortal of

him whom Scott called the "Father of the English Novel." His first tomb, which Wraxall found in 1772, "nearly concealed by weeds and nettles," was erected by the English factory, in consequence mainly—as it seems—of a proposal made by an enthusiastic Chevalier de Meyrionnet, to provide one (with an epitaph) at his own expense. That now existing was substituted in 1830, by the exertions of the Rev. Christopher Neville, British Chaplain at Lisbon. It is a heavy sarcophagus, resting upon a large base, and surmounted by just such another urn and flame as that on Hogarth's Tomb at Chiswick. On the front is a long Latin inscription; on the back the better-known words:—

LUGET BRITANNIA GREMIO NON DARI  
FOVERE NATUM.<sup>1</sup>

It is to this last memorial that the late George Borrow referred in his *Bible in Spain*.—

"Let travellers devote one entire morning to inspecting the Arcos and the Mai das agoas, after which they may repair to the English church and cemetery, Père-la-chaise in miniature, where, if they be of England, they may well be excused if they kiss the cold tomb, as I did, of the author of "Amelia," the most singular genius which their island ever produced, whose works it has long been the fashion to abuse in public and to read in secret."

Borrow's book was first published in 1843. Of late years the tomb had been somewhat neglected; but from a communication in the *Athenæum* of May 1879, it appears that it had then been recently cleaned, and

<sup>1</sup> The fifth word is generally given as "datum." But the above version, which has been verified at Lisbon, may be accepted as correct.

the inscriptions restored, by order of the present chaplain, the Rev. Godfrey Pope.

There is but one authentic portrait of Henry Fielding. This is the pen-and-ink sketch drawn from memory by Hogarth, long after Fielding's death, to serve as a frontispiece for Murphy's edition of his works. It was engraved in *facsimile* by James Basire, with such success that the artist is said to have mistaken an impression of the plate (without its emblematic border) for his own drawing. Hogarth's sketch is the sole source of all the portraits, more or less "romanced," which are prefixed to editions of Fielding; and also, there is good reason to suspect, of the dubious little miniature, still in possession of his descendants, which figures in Hutchins's *History of Dorset* and elsewhere. More than one account has been given of the way in which the drawing was produced. The most effective, and, unfortunately, the most popular, version has, of course, been selected by Murphy. In this he tells us that Hogarth, being unable to recall his dead friend's features, had recourse to a profile cut in paper by a lady, who possessed the happy talent which Pope ascribes to Lady Burlington. Her name, which is given in Nichols, was Margaret Collier, and she was possibly the identical Miss Collier who figures in Richardson's *Correspondence*. Setting aside the fact that, as Hogarth's eye-memory was marvellous, this story is highly improbable, it was expressly contradicted by George Steevens in 1781, and by John Ireland in 1798, both of whom, from their relations with Hogarth's family, were likely to be credibly informed. Steevens, after referring to Murphy's fable, says in the *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth*, "1

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Beyond the fact that he was above six feet in height, and, until the gout had broken his constitution, unusually robust, Murphy adds nothing further to our idea of his personal appearance.

That other picture of his character, traced and retraced (often with much exaggeration of outline), is so familiar in English literature, that it cannot now be materially altered or amended. Yet it is impossible not to wish that it were derived from some less prejudiced or more trustworthy witnesses than those who have spoken,—say, for example, from Lyttelton or Allen. There are always signs that Walpole's malice, and Smollett's animosity, and the rancour of Richardson, have had too much to do with the representation; and even Murphy and Lady Mary are scarcely persons whom one would select as ideal biographers. The latter is probably right in comparing her cousin to Sir Richard Steele. Both were generous, kindly, brave, and sensitive; both were improvident; both loved women and little children; both sinned often, and had their moments of sincere repentance; to both was given that irrepressible hopefulness, and full delight of being which forgets to-morrow in to-day. That Henry Fielding was wild and reckless in his youth it would be idle to contest;—indeed it is an intelligible, if not a necessary, consequence of his physique and his temperament. But it is not fair to speak of him as if his youth lasted for ever. "Critics and biographers," says Mr. Leslie Stephen, "have dwelt far too exclusively upon the uglier side of his Bohemian life;" and Fielding himself, in the *Jacobite's Journal*, complains sadly

to be like Fielding by Fielding's friends. [The bust was placed in the Shire Hall, 4th September 1883.]

that his enemies have traced his impeachment "even to his boyish Years." That he who was prodigal as a lad was prodigal as a man may be conceded; that he who was sanguine at twenty would be sanguine at forty (although this is less defensible) may also be allowed. But, if we press for "better assurance than Bardolph," there is absolutely no good evidence that Fielding's career after his marriage materially differed from that of other men struggling for a livelihood, hampered with ill-health, and exposed to all the shifts and humiliations of necessity. If any portrait of him is to be handed down to posterity, let it be the last rather than the first;—not the Fielding of the green-room and the tavern—of Covent Garden frolics and "modern conversations;" but the energetic magistrate, the tender husband and father, the kindly host of his poorer friends, the practical philanthropist, the patient and magnanimous hero of the *Voyage to Lisbon*. If these things be remembered, it will seem of minor importance that to his dying day he never knew the value of money, or that he forgot his troubles over a chicken and champagne. And even his improvidence was not without its excusable side. Once—so runs the legend—Andrew Millar made him an advance to meet the claims of an importunate tax-gatherer. Carrying it home, he met a friend, in even worse straits than his own; and the money changed hands. When the tax-gatherer arrived there was nothing but the answer—"Friendship has called for the money and had it; let the collector call again." Justice, it is needless to say, was satisfied by a second advance from the bookseller. But who shall condemn the man of whom such a story can be told?



The literary work of Fielding is so inextricably interwoven with what is known of his life that most of it has been examined in the course of the foregoing narrative. What remains to be said is chiefly in summary of what has been said already. As a dramatist he has no eminence; and though his plays do not deserve the sweeping condemnation with which Macaulay once spoke of them in the House of Commons, they are not likely to attract any critics but those for whom the inferior efforts of a great genius possess a morbid fascination. Some of them serve, in a measure, to illustrate his career; others contain hints and situations which he afterwards worked into his novels; but the only ones that possess real stage qualities are those which he borrowed from Regnard and Molière. *Don Quixote in England*, *Pasquin*, the *Historical Register*, can claim no present consideration commensurate with that which they received as contemporary satires, and their interest is mainly antiquarian; while *Tom Thumb* and the *Covent-Garden Tragedy*, the former of which would make the reputation of a smaller man, can scarcely hope to be remembered beside *Amelia* or *Jonathan Wild*. Nor can it be admitted that, as a periodical writer, Fielding was at his best. In spite of effective passages, his essays remain far below the work of the great Augustans, and are not above the level of many of their less illustrious imitators. That instinct of popular selection, which retains a faint hold upon the *Rambler*, the *Adventurer*, the *World*, and the *Connoisseur*, or at least consents to give them honourable interment as "British Essayists" in a secluded corner of the shelves, has made no pretence to any preservation, or even any winnowing, of the *Champion* and the *True Patriot*. Field-

ing's papers are learned and ingenious; they are frequently humorous; they are often earnest; but it must be a loiterer in literature who, in these days, except for antiquarian or biographical purposes, can honestly find it worth while to consult them. His pamphlets and projects are more valuable, if only that they prove him to have looked curiously and sagaciously at social and political problems, and to have striven, as far as in him lay, to set the crooked straight. Their import, to-day, is chiefly that of links in a chain—of contributions to a progressive literature which has travelled into regions unforeseen by the author of the *Proposal for the Poor*, and the *Inquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers*. As such, they have their place in that library of Political Economy of which Mr. McCulloch has catalogued the riches. It is not, however, by his pamphlets, his essays, or his plays that Fielding is really memorable; it is by his triad of novels, and the surpassing study in irony of *Jonathan Wild*. In *Joseph Andrews* we have the first sprightly runnings of a genius that, after much uncertainty, had at last found its fitting vein, but was yet doubtful and undisciplined: in *Tom Jones* the perfect plan has come, with the perfected method and the assured expression. There is an inevitable loss of that fine waywardness which is sometimes the result of untrained effort, but there is the general gain of order, and the full production which results of art. The highest point is reached in *Tom Jones*, which is the earliest definite and authoritative manifestation of the modern novel. Its relation to De Foe is that of the vertebrate to the invertebrate: to Richardson, that of the real to the ideal—one might almost add, the impossible. It can

be compared to no contemporary English work of its own kind; and if we seek for its parallel at the time of publication we must go beyond literature to art—to the masterpiece of that great pictorial satirist who was Fielding's friend. In both Fielding and Hogarth there is the same constructive power, the same rigid sequence of cause and effect, the same significance of detail, the same side-light of allusion. Both have the same hatred of affectation and hypocrisy—the same unerring insight into character. Both are equally attracted by striking contrasts and comic situations; in both there is the same declared morality of purpose, coupled with the same sturdy virility of expression. One, it is true, leaned more strongly to tragedy, the other to comedy. But if Fielding had painted pictures, it would have been in the style of the *Marriage à la Mode*; if Hogarth had written novels, they would have been in the style of *Tom Jones*. In the gentler and more subdued *Amelia*, with its tender and womanly central-figure, there is a certain change of plan, due to altered conditions—it may be, to an altered philosophy of art. The narrative is less brisk and animated; the character-painting less broadly humorous; the philanthropic element more strongly developed. To trace the influence of these three great works in succeeding writers would hold us too long. It may, nevertheless, be safely asserted that there are few English novels of manners, written since Fielding's day, which do not descend from him as from their fount and source; and that more than one of our modern masters betray unmistakable signs of a form and fashion studied minutely from their frank and manly ancestor.

## POSTSCRIPT.

A FEW particulars respecting Fielding's family and posthumous works can scarcely be omitted from the present memoir. It has been stated that by his first wife he had one daughter, the Harriet or Harriot who accompanied him to Lisbon, and survived him, although Mr. Keightley says, but without giving his authority, she did not survive him long. Of his family by Mary Daniel, the eldest son, William, to whose birth reference has already been made, was bred to the law, became a barrister of the Middle Temple eminent as a special pleader, and ultimately a Westminster magistrate. He died in October 1820, at the age of seventy-three. He seems to have shared his father's conversational qualities,<sup>1</sup> and, like him, to have been a strenuous advocate of the poor and unfortunate. Southey, writing from Keswick in 1830 to Sir Egerton Brydges, speaks of a meeting he had in St. James's Park, about 1817, with one of the novelist's sons. "He was then," says Southey, "a fine old man, though visibly shaken by time : he received me in a manner which had much of old courtesy about it, and I looked upon him with great interest for his father's sake." The date, and the fact that William

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, chap. I.



Fielding had had a paralytic stroke, make it almost certain that this was he; and a further reference by Southey to his religious opinions is confirmed by the obituary notice in the *Gentleman's*, which speaks of him as a worthy and pious man. The names and baptisms of the remaining children, as supplied for these pages by the late Colonel Chester, were Mary Amelia, baptized January 6, 1749; Sophia, January 21, 1750; Louisa, December 3, 1752; and Allen, April 6, 1754, about a month before Fielding removed to Ealing. All these baptisms took place at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, from the registers of which these particulars were extracted. The eldest daughter, Mary Amelia, does not appear to have long survived, for the same registers record her burial on the 17th December 1749. Allen Fielding became a clergyman, and died, according to Burke, in 1823, being then vicar of St. Stephen's, Canterbury. He left a family of four sons and three daughters. One of the sons, George, became rector of North Ockendon, Essex, and married, in 1825, Mary Rebecca, daughter of Ferdinand Hanbury-Williams, and grandniece of Fielding's friend and school-fellow Sir Charles. This lady, who so curiously linked the present and the past, died not long since at Hereford Square, Brompton, in her eighty-fifth year. Mrs. Fielding herself (Mary Daniel) appears to have attained a good old age. Her death took place at Canterbury on the 11th of March 1802, perhaps in the house of her son Allen, who is stated by Nichols in his *Leicestershire* to have been rector in 1803 of St. Cosmus and Damian-in-the-Blean. After her husband's death, her children were educated by their uncle John and Ralph Allen, the latter of

whom—says Murphy—made a very liberal annual donation for that purpose ; and (adds Chalmers in a note), when he died in 1764, bequeathed to the widow and those of her family then living, the sum of £100 each.

Among Fielding's other connections it is only necessary to speak of his sister Sarah, and his above-mentioned brother John. Sarah Fielding continued to write; and in addition to *David Simple*, published the *Governess*, 1749; a translation of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*; a dramatic fable called the *Cry*, and some other forgotten books. During the latter part of her life she lived at Bath, where she was highly popular, both for her personal character and her accomplishments. She died in 1768; and her friend, Dr. John Hoadly, who wrote the verses to the *Rake's Progress*, erected a monument to her memory in the Abbey Church.

“Her unaffected Manners, candid Mind,  
Her Heart benevolent, and Soul resign'd ;  
Were more her Praise than all she knew or thought  
Though Athens Wisdom to her Sex she taught,”—

says he; but in mere facts the inscription is, as he modestly styles it, a “deficient Memorial,” for she is described as having been born in 1714 instead of 1710, and as being the second daughter of General *Henry* instead of General *Edmund* Fielding. John Fielding, the novelist's half-brother, as already stated, succeeded him at Bow Street, though the post is sometimes claimed (on Boswell's authority) for Mr. Welch. The mistake no doubt arose from the circumstance that they frequently worked in concert. Previous to his appointment as a magistrate, John Fielding, in addition to assisting his brother, seems to have been largely

concerned in the promotion of that curious enterprise, the "Universal-Register-Office," so often advertised in the *Covent-Garden Journal*. It appears to have been an Estate Office, Lost Property Office, Servants' Registry, Curiosity Shop, and multifarious General Agency. As a magistrate, in spite of his blindness, John Fielding was remarkably energetic, and is reported to have known more than 3000 thieves by their voices alone, and could recognise them when brought into Court. A description of London and Westminster is often ascribed to him, but he denied the authorship. He was knighted in 1761, and died at Brompton Place in 1780. Lyttelton, who had become Sir George in 1751, was raised to the peerage as Baron Lyttelton of Frankley three years after Fielding's death. He died in 1773. In 1760-5 he published his *Dialogues of the Dead*, profanely characterised by Mr. Walpole as "Dead Dialogues." No. 28 of these is a colloquy between "Plutarch, Charon, and a Modern Bookseller," and it contains the following reference to Fielding:—"We have [says Mr. Bookseller] another writer of these imaginary histories, one who has not long since descended to these regions. His name is Fielding; and his works, as I have heard the best judges say, have a true spirit of comedy, and an exact representation of nature, with fine moral touches. He has not indeed given lessons of pure and consummate virtue, but he has exposed vice and meanness with all the powers of ridicule." It is perhaps excusable that Lawrence, like Roscoe and others, should have attributed this to Lyttelton; but the preface nevertheless assigns it, with two other dialogues, to a "different hand." They were, in fact, the first essays in authorship of that illustrious blue-stocking, Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu.

Fielding's only posthumous works are the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* and the comedy of *The Fathers; or, The Good-Natur'd Man*. The *Journal* was published in February 1755, together with a fragment of a Comment on Bolingbroke's *Essays*, which Mallet had issued in March of the previous year. This fragment must therefore have been begun in the last months of Fielding's life; and, according to Murphy, he made very careful preparation for the work, as attested by long extracts from the *Fathers* and the leading controversialists, which, after his death, were preserved by his brother. Beyond a passage or two in Richardson's *Correspondence*, and a sneering reference by Walpole to Fielding's "account how his dropsy was treated and teased by an innkeeper's wife in the Isle of Wight," there is nothing to show how the *Journal* was received, still less that it brought any substantial pecuniary relief to "those innocents," to whom reference had been made in the "Dedication." The play was not placed upon the stage until 1778. Its story, which is related in the *Advertisement*, is curious. After it had been set aside in 1742,<sup>1</sup> it seems to have been submitted to Sir Charles Hanbury Williams. Sir Charles was just starting for Russia, as Envoy Extraordinary. Whether the MS. went with him or not is unknown; but it was lost until 1775 or 1776, when it was recovered in a tattered and forlorn condition by Mr. Johnes, M.P. for Cardigan, from a person who entertained a very poor and even contemptuous opinion of its merits. Mr. Johnes thought otherwise. He sent it to Garrick, who at once recognised it as "Harry Fielding's Comedy." Revised and

<sup>1</sup> Vide chap. iv. p. 94.



retouched by the actor and Sheridan, it was produced at Drury Lane, as *The Fathers*, with a Prologue and Epilogue by Garrick. For a few nights it was received with interest, and even some flickering enthusiasm. It was then withdrawn; and there is no likelihood that it will ever be revived.

## APPENDIX No I.

FIELDING AND SARAH ANDREW.

By the courtesy of the editor of the *Athenæum*, the following letter is here reprinted from that paper for 2d June 1883 :—

75 Eaton Rise, Ealing.

In 1855, when Mr. Frederick Lawrence published his *Life of Henry Fielding*, he thus referred (ch. vii. p. 67) to an "early passage" in the novelist's career: "On his [Fielding's] return from Leyden he conceived a desperate attachment for his cousin, Miss Sarah Andrews [*sic*]. That young lady's friends had, however, so little confidence in her wild kinsman, that they took the precaution of removing her out of his reach; not, it is said, until he had attempted an abduction or elopement. . . . His cousin was afterwards married to a plain country gentleman, and in that alliance found, perhaps, more solid happiness than she would have experienced in an early and improvident marriage with her gifted kinsman. Her image, however, was never effaced from his recollection; and there is a charming picture (so tradition tells) of her luxuriant beauty in the portrait of Sophia Western, in *Tom Jones*." Mr. Lawrence gave no hint or sign of his authority for this unexpected and hitherto unrecorded incident. But the review of his book in the *Athenæum* for 10th November 1855 elicited the following notes on the subject from Mr. George Roberts, some time mayor of Lyme, and author of a brief history of that town. "Henry Fielding," wrote Mr. Roberts, "was at Lyme Regis, Dorset,

for the purpose of carrying off an heiress, Miss Andrew, the daughter of Solomon Andrew, Esq., the last of a series of merchants of that name at Lyme. The young lady was living with Mr. Andrew Tucker, one of the corporation, who sent her away to Modbury, in South Devon, where she married an ancestor of the present Rev. Mr. Rhodes, an eloquent preacher of Bath, who possesses the Andrew property. Mr. Rhodes's son married the young lady upon his return to Modbury from Oxford. The circumstances about the attempts of Henry Fielding to carry off the young lady, handed down in the ancient Tucker family, were doubted by the late head of his family, Dr. Rhodes, of Shapwick, Uplyme, etc. Since his decease I have found an entry in the old archives of Lyme about the fears of Andrew Tucker, Esq., the guardian, as to his safety, owing to the behaviour of Henry Fielding and his attendant, or man. According to the tradition of the Tucker family, given in my *History of Lyme*, Sophia Western was intended to portray Miss Andrew." To Mr. Roberts's communication succeeded that of another correspondent—one "P. S."—who gave some additional particulars: "There is now, at Bellair, in the immediate neighbourhood of Exeter the portrait of 'Sophia Western' [Miss Andrew]. Bellair belongs to the Rhodes family, and was the residence of the late George Ambrose Rhodes, Fellow of Caius College, and formerly Physician to the Devon and Exeter Hospital. He himself directed my attention to this picture. In the board-room of the above hospital there is also the three-quarter length portrait of Ralph Allen, Esq., the 'Squire Allworthy' of the same novel." No further contribution appears to have been made to the literature of the subject. The late Mr. Keightley, in his articles on Lawrence's book in *Fraser's Magazine* for January and February 1858, did, as a matter of fact, refer to the story and Mr. Roberts's confirmation of it; but beyond pointing out that Miss Andrew could not have been the original of Sophia Western, who is declared by Fielding himself (*Tom Jones*, bk. xiii. ch. i.) to have been the portrait of his first wife, Charlotte Cradock, he added nothing to the existing information.

When I began to prepare the sketch of Fielding recently included in Mr. John Morley's series of "English Men of Letters," matters stood at this point, and I had little hope that any supplementary details could be obtained. I was, indeed, fortunate enough to discover that Burke's *Landed Gentry* for 1858 gave the year of Miss Andrew's marriage as 1726; and inquiries at Modbury, though they did not actually confirm this, practically did so, by disclosing the fact that a child of Mr. and Mrs. Ambrose Rhodes was baptized at that place in April 1727. It became clear, therefore, that instead of being subsequent to Fielding's "return from Leyden" in 1728, as Lawrence supposed, the date of the reported attempt at elopement could not have been later than 1725 or the early part of 1726—so far back, in fact, in Fielding's life that I confess to having entertained a private doubt whether it ever occurred at all. That doubt has now been completely removed by the appearance of some new and wholly unlooked-for evidence.

After the publication in 1858 of his *Fraser* papers, Mr. Keightley seems to have continued his researches with the intention of writing a final biography of Fielding. In this, which was to include a reprint of the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* and a critical examination of Fielding's works, he made considerable progress; and by the courtesy of his nephew, Mr. Alfred C. Lyster, his MSS. have been placed at my disposal. Much that relates to Fielding's life has manifestly the disadvantage of having been written more than twenty years ago, and it reproduces some aspects of Fielding which have now been abandoned; but in the elucidation and expansion of the Sarah Andrew episode Mr. Keightley leaves little to be desired. His first step, apparently, was to communicate with Mr. Roberts, who furnished him (6th May 1859) with the following transcript or summary of the original record in the *Register Book of Lyme Regis* :—

"John Bowdidge, Jun., was Mayor when Andrew Tucker, Gent., one of the corporation, caused Henry Fielding, Gent., and his servant or companion, Joseph Lewis—both now and for some time past residing in the borough—to be bound over to keep the peace, as he was in fear of his life or some



bodily hurt to be done or to be procured to be done to him by H. Fielding and his man. Mr. A. Tucker feared that the man would beat, maim, or kill him. 14th November 1725."

We thus get the exact date of the occurrence, 14th November 1725 (*i.e.* when Fielding was eighteen), the fact that he had been staying for some time in Lyme at that date, and the name of his servant. In a further letter of 14th May 1859, Mr. Roberts referred Mr. Keightley to Mr. James Davidson, a Devon antiquary, in whose *History of Newenham Abbey*, Longmans, 1843 (surely a most out-of-the-way source of information!), he found the following, derived by the author from the Rhodes family (pp. 165, 166):—

"The estate [of Shapwick, near Axminster] continued but a short time the property of the noble family of Petre, being sold by William the fourth baron, on the 10th of November 1670, to Solomon Andrew of Lyme Regis, a gentleman, who possessed a considerable property obtained by his ancestors and himself in mercantile affairs. From him it descended to his only son, who died at the age of twenty-nine years, leaving two sons and a daughter, the latter of whom, by the decease of her brothers, became heiress to the estate. This young lady was placed under the guardianship of Mr. Rhodes of Modbury, and her uncle, Mr. Tucker of Lyme, in whose family she resided. At this time Henry Fielding, whose very objectionable but once popular works have placed his name high on the list of novel-writers, was an occasional visitor at the place, and enraptured with the charms and the more solid attractions of Miss Andrew, paid her the most assiduous attention. The views of her guardians were, however, opposed to a connection with so dissipated, though well-born and well-educated a youth, who is said to have in consequence made a desperate attempt to carry the lady off by force on a Sunday, when she was on her way to church. The residence of the heiress was then removed to Modbury, and the disappointed admirer found consolation in the society of a beauty at Salisbury whom he married."

There are some manifest misconceptions in this account, due, no doubt, to Mr. Davidson's ignorance of the exact

period of the occurrence as established by the above record in the Lyme archives. In the first place, it must have been four or five years at least before Fielding consoled himself with Miss Charlotte Cradock, and nearly ten (according to the received date) before he married her. Again, in saying that he was "dissipated," Mr. Davidson must have been thinking of his conventional after-character, for in 1725 he was but a boy fresh from Eton, and could scarcely have established any reputation as a rake. Nor is there anything in our whole knowledge of him to justify us in supposing that he was at any time a mere mercenary fortune-hunter. Finally, according to one of Mr. Roberts's letters to Mr. Keightley, timorous Mr. Tucker of Lyme had a very different reason from his personal shortcomings for objecting to Fielding as a suitor to his ward. "The Tucker family," says Mr. Roberts, "by tradition consider themselves tricked out of the heiress, Miss Andrew, by Mr. Rhodes of Modbury, Mr. Andrew Tucker intending the lady for his own son." Nevertheless, these reservations made, Mr. Davidson's version, although *ex parte*, supplies colour and detail to the story. From a pedigree which he gives in his book, it further appears that Mrs. Rhodes died on the 22d. of August 1783, aged seventy-three. This would make her fifteen in 1725. There remained Lawrence's enigmatical declaration that she was Fielding's cousin. Briefly stated, the result of Mr. Keightley's inquiries in this direction tends to show that Miss Andrew's mother was connected with the family of Fielding's mother, the Goulds of Sharpham Park; and as Mr. Lawrence does not seem to have been aware of the existence of Davidson's book, or to have had any acquaintance with the traditions or archives of Lyme, Mr. Keightley surmises, very plausibly, that his unvouched data must have been derived, directly or indirectly, from the Rhodes family.

Mr. Keightley also ingeniously attempts to connect Fielding's subsequent residence at Leyden (1726-28 ?<sup>1</sup>) with

<sup>1</sup> See Peacock's *Index to English-speaking Students who have graduated at Leyden University*, 1883 (p. 35), where Fielding's name occurs under date of 16th March 1728, and *Cornhill Magazine* for November 1863—"A Scotchman in Holland."

this affair by assuming that he was despatched to the Dutch university, instead of Oxford or Cambridge, in order to keep him out of harm's way. This is, however, to travel somewhat from the realm of fact into that of romance. At the same time, it must be admitted that the materials for romance are tempting. A charming girl, who is also an heiress; a pusillanimous guardian with ulterior views of his own; a handsome and high-spirited young suitor; a faithful attendant ready to "beat, maim, or kill" in his master's behalf; a frustrated elopement and a compulsory visit to the mayor—all these, with the picturesque old town of Lyme for a background, suggest a most appropriate first act to Harry Fielding's biographical tragi-comedy. But to do such a theme justice we must

"call up him that left half-told"

the story of *Denis Duval*.

## APPENDIX No. II.

### FIELDING AND MRS. HUSSEY.

AT pp. 124-5, vol. i., of J. T. Smith's *Nollekens and his Times*, 1828, occurs the following note:—

"Henry Fielding was fond of colouring his pictures of life with the glowing and variegated tints of Nature, by conversing with persons of every situation and calling, as I have frequently been informed by one of my [*i.e.* J. T. Smith's] great-aunts, the late Mrs. Hussey, who knew him intimately. I have heard her say, that Mr. Fielding never suffered his talent for sprightly conversation to mildew for a moment; and that his manners were so gentlemanly, that even with the lower classes, with which he frequently condescended particularly to chat, such as Sir Roger de Coverley's old friends, the Vauxhall watermen, they seldom outstepped the limits of propriety. My aunt, who lived to the age of 105,

had been blessed with four husbands, and her name had twice been changed to that of Hussey: she was of a most delightful disposition, of a retentive memory, highly entertaining, and liberally communicative; and to her I have frequently been obliged for an interesting anecdote. She was, after the death of her second husband, Mr. Hussey, a fashionable saccue and mantua-maker, and lived in the Strand, a few doors west of the residence of the celebrated Le Beck, a famous cook, who had a large portrait of himself for the sign of his house, at the north-west corner of Half-moon Street, since called Little Bedford Street. One day Mr. Fielding observed to Mrs. Hussey, that he was then engaged in writing a novel, which he thought would be his best production; and that he intended to introduce in it the characters of all his friends. Mrs. Hussey, with a smile, ventured to remark, that he must have many niches, and that surely they must already be filled. 'I assure you, my dear madam,' replied he, 'there shall be a bracket for a bust of you.' Some time after this, he informed Mrs. Hussey that the work was in the press; but, immediately recollecting that he had forgotten his promise to her, went to the printer, and was time enough to insert, in vol. iii. p. 17 [bk. x. ch. iv.], where he speaks of the shape of Sophia Western—'Such charms are there in affability, and so sure is it to attract the praises of all kinds of people.'—'It may, indeed, be compared to the celebrated Mrs. Hussey.' To which observation he has given the following note: 'A celebrated mantua-maker in the Strand, famous for setting off the shapes of women.'

There is no reason for supposing that this neglected anecdote should not be in all respects authentic. In fact, upon the venerated principle that

"there it stands unto this day  
To witness if I lie,"—

the existence of the passage and note in *Tom Jones* is practically sufficient argument for its veracity. This being so, it surely deserves some consideration for the light which it throws on Fielding's character. Mrs. Hussey's testimony as to his dignified and gentlemanly manners, which does not



seem to be advanced to meet any particular charge, may surely be set against any innuendoes of the Burney and Walpole type as to his mean environment and coarse conversation. And the suggestion that "the characters of all his friends"—by which must be intended rather mention of them than portraits—are to be found in his masterpiece, is fairly borne out by the most casual inspection of *Tom Jones*, especially the first edition, where all the proper names are in italics. In the dedication alone are references to the "princely Benefactions" of John, Duke of Bedford, and to Lyttelton and Ralph Allen, both of whom are also mentioned by name in bk. xiii. ch. i. The names of Hogarth and Garrick also occur frequently. In bk. iv. ch. i. is an anecdote of Wilks the player, who had been one of Fielding's earliest patrons. The surgeon in the story of the "Man of the Hill" (bk. viii. ch. xiii.) "whose Name began with an R," and who "was Sergeant-Surgeon to the King," evidently stands for Hogarth's Chiswick neighbour, Mr. Ranby, by whose advice Fielding was ordered to Bath in 1753. Again, he knew, though he did not greatly admire, Warburton, to whose learning there is a handsome compliment in bk. xiii. ch. i. In bk. xv. ch. iv. is the name of another friend or acquaintance (also mentioned in the *Journey from this World to the Next*), Hooke, of the *Roman History*, who, like the author of *Tom Jones*, had drawn his pen for Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. Bk. xi. ch. iv. contains an anecdote, real or imaginary, of Richard Nash, with whom Fielding must certainly have become familiar in his visits to Bath; and it is probable that Square's medical advisers (bk. xviii. ch. iv.), Dr. Harrington and Dr. Brewster, both of whom subscribed to the *Miscellanies* of 1743, were well-known Bathonians. Mr. Willoughby, also a subscriber, was probably "Justice Willoughby of Noyle" referred to in bk. viii. ch. xi. Whether the use of Handel's name in bk. iv. ch. v. is of any significance there is no evidence; but the description in bk. iv. ch. vi. of Conscience "sitting on its Throne in the Mind, like the LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR of this Kingdom in his Court," and fulfilling its functions "with a Knowledge which nothing escapes, a Penetration which nothing can deceive, and an

Integrity which nothing can corrupt," is clearly an oblique panegyric of Philip Yorke, Lord Hardwicke, to whom, two years later, Fielding dedicated his *Enquiry into the late Increase of Robbers*, etc. Besides these, there are references to Bishop Hoadly (bk. ii. ch. vii.), Mrs. Whitefield, of the "Bell" at Gloucester, and Mr. Timothy Harris (bk. viii. ch. viii.), Mrs. Clive, and Mr. Miller of the *Gardener's Dictionary* (bk. ix. ch. i.); and closer examination would no doubt reveal further allusions. Meanwhile the above will be sufficient to show that the statement of the "celebrated mantua-maker in the Strand" respecting Fielding's friends in *Tom Jones* is not without foundation.

## APPENDIX No. III.

## AMELIA'S ACCIDENT.

IN addition to the alterations mentioned at p. 109 n., Fielding inserted the following paragraph in the *Covent-Garden Journal*, No. 3, for 11th January 1752:—

"It is currently reported that a famous Surgeon, who absolutely cured one Mrs. Amelia Booth, of a violent Hurt in her Nose, insomuch, that she had scarce a Scar left on it, intends to bring Actions against several ill-meaning and slanderous People, who have reported that the said Lady had no Nose, merely because the Author of her History, in a Hurry, forgot to inform his Readers of that Particular, and which, if those Readers had any Nose themselves, except that which is mentioned in the Motto of this Paper, they would have smelt out."

The motto is the passage from Martial (Ep. i. 4. 6) in which he speaks of the *nasus rhinocerotis*.

## APPENDIX No. IV.

## FIELDINGIANA.

THE three foregoing Appendices were added to the second edition of 1889. In this Appendix, No. IV., I propose to bring together a few dispersed fragments of information, which, either in the way of fresh particulars, or in correction of hitherto-accepted statements made in the body of the book, have come to light during the interval. Much that is absolutely new cannot, at this date, be reasonably anticipated. But the unexpected always happens; and the unexpected in the present instance has been productive of two or three items which are not unworthy of brief record.

The first relates to that famous "eulogy of Gibbon" mentioned in the second sentence of the book. The connexion of Fielding's family with the Hapsburgs is now no longer asserted. In April 1894 the question was exhaustively examined in the *Genealogist* (New Series) by Mr. J. Horace Round, who came to the conclusion that such a claim could not be established; and that, consequently, any picturesque conjunction between that "exquisite picture of human manners" (as Gibbon called *Tom Jones*)<sup>1</sup> and the "Imperial Eagle of the house of Austria" must henceforth be abandoned. Mr. Round has since reprinted his paper at pp. 216-49 of his *Studies in Peerage and Family History*, 1901; and in a final paragraph he announces that his arguments, at first hotly contested, have now been accepted by Burke, from whose records the story has been withdrawn.

The next matter is the exact period of Fielding's residence at Leyden (p. 8). This, although somewhat developed, long remained obscure. In 1883, in the absence of other data, I accepted, as my predecessors had done, Murphy's statement that Fielding "went from Eton to Leyden, and there continued to show an eager thirst for knowledge, and to study the civilians with a remarkable application for about two years,

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon*, 1896, p. 419.

when, remittances failing, he was obliged to return to London, *not then quite twenty years old* [i.e. before 22nd April 1727]."<sup>1</sup> When the "Sarah Andrew" episode was conclusively traced to November 1725 (Appendix I, p. 200), it seemed only reasonable to suppose that it was succeeded by the Leyden expatriation, especially as Fielding's first play was produced in February 1728. Nor was this supposition seriously disturbed by the appearance of further information. Among Mr. Keightley's MSS. I found reference to a paper in the *Cornhill Magazine* for November 1863, entitled "A Scotchman in Holland" (I believe it to have been by James Hannay). In this the writer stated that he had been allowed to inspect the Album of the University of Leyden, and had there, under 1728, found the entry, "Henricus Fielding, Anglus, Ann. 20. Stud. Lit." Further, that Fielding was living at the Hotel of Antwerp. It will be noted that this account was derived from the Album itself; and that Fielding is styled "Stud. Lit." Twelve years after the *Cornhill* article, the University published their list of students from 1575 to 1875; and in 1883 Mr. Edward Peacock, F.S.A., compiled from it, for the "Index Society," an *Index to English speaking Students who have graduated at Leyden University*. At p. 35 of this appears "Fielding, Henricus, *Anglus*, 16 Mart. 1728. [col.] 915." This, it will be observed, adds the month and day, but reveals nothing as to the class of study. As I have implied, neither of these entries was seriously inconsistent with Murphy's statement, except as regards "studying the civilians." But in 1906, Mr. A. E. H. Swaen printed in the *Modern Language Review*<sup>2</sup> what was apparently the fullest version of the inscription. From col. 915 (the column given by Mr. Peacock), he copied the following:—"Febr. 16. 1728: Rectore Johanne Wesselio, Henricus Fielding, Anglus. 20, L." Mr. Swaen held that this meant that, on the date named, Fielding was entered as *litterarum studiosus* at Leyden. In this case, it would follow that his stay in Holland must have been subsequent to February 16, 1728; and Mr. Swaen went on to suggest that as Fielding's "first

<sup>1</sup> Fielding's *Works*, 1762, i. 8. The italics are mine.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. i. pp. 327-8 (July 1906, No. iv.).



play, *Love in Several Masques*, was staged at Drury Lane in February 1728, and his next play, *The Temple Beau*, was produced in January 1730," the barren interval or part of it, may have been filled by residence at Leyden.

The fresh complications imported into the question by this new aspect of it will be at once apparent. Up to 1875 there had been but one Fielding on the Leyden books; so that all these differing accounts were variations from a single source. In this difficulty I was fortunate enough to enlist the sympathy of Mr. Frederic Harrison, who most kindly undertook to make inquiries on my behalf at Leyden University itself. In reply to certain definite queries drawn up by me, he obtained from the distinguished scholar and Professor of History, Dr. Pieter Blok, the following authoritative particulars. The exact words in the original *Album Academicum* are:—"16 Martii 1728 Henricus Fielding, Anglus, annor. 20 Litt. Stud." He was then staying at the "Casteel van Antwerpen"—as related by "A Scotchman in Holland." His name only occurs again in the yearly *recensiones* under the 22nd February 1729, as "Henricus Fieldingh," when he was domiciled with one Jan Oson. He must, consequently, have left Leyden before the 8th February 1730,—the 8th February being the birthday of the University, after which all students had to be annually registered. The entry in the *Album* (as Mr. Swaen affirmed) is an admission entry; there are no leaving entries. As regards "studying the civilians," Fielding might, in those days—Dr Blok explains—have had private lessons from the professors, but could not have studied in the University without being on the books. To sum up:—After producing *Love in Several Masques* at Drury Lane, probably on the 12th February 1728,<sup>1</sup> Fielding was admitted a "Litt. Stud." at Leyden University on 16th March; was still there in February 1729; and left before 8th February 1730. Murphy is therefore in fault in almost every particular. Fielding did *not* go from Eton to Leyden; he did *not* make any recognised study of the civilians "with remarkable application" or otherwise; and he did *not* return to London

<sup>1</sup> Genest, iii. 209.

before he was twenty. But it is by no means improbable that the proximate cause of his coming home was the failure of remittances.

Another of the hitherto-unsolved difficulties in Fielding's life has been the date of his first marriage (p. 38). Lawrence gave the year as 1735 ; and Keightley suggested the spring of that year. This, as Swift would say, is near the mark, though confirmation has been slow in coming. In a letter dated 18th June 1906, Mr. Thomas S. Bush announced in the *Bath Chronicle* that the desired information was to be found in a register (not at Salisbury, where search had been fruitlessly made, but) at the tiny church of St. Mary, Charlcombe, a secluded parish about one and a half miles north of Bath. Here is the record :—"November y<sup>e</sup> 28, 1734.—Henry Fielding, of y<sup>e</sup> Parish of St. James in Bath, Esq., and Charlotte Cradock, of y<sup>e</sup> same Parish, spinster, were married by virtue of a license from y<sup>e</sup> Court of Wells." All Fielding lovers owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Bush, whose researches also revealed the fact that Sarah Fielding, the novelist's third sister, was buried, not in Bath Abbey, where Dr. John Hoadly<sup>1</sup> raised a mural memorial to her, but "in y<sup>e</sup> entrance of the chancel [of Charlcombe Church] close to y<sup>e</sup> Rector's seat," 14th April 1768. These are not the only fresh traces of the connexion of the Fieldings with the old "Queen of the West." In June last a tablet to Fielding and his sister was placed on the wall of Yew Cottage, now Widcombe Lodge, Church Street, Widcombe, where they once lived.

Sarah Fielding figures frequently in Richardson's *Correspondence* ; and it is with Richardson as much as with Fielding that the next jotting is concerned. Previously to 1900, although second-hand booksellers had, I believe, occasionally attributed to Fielding the pamphlet known as *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*, April 1741, no one had devoted much attention to that unworshipful

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Hoadly is sometimes said to have written her epitaph. In this case it must have been (like Dr. Primrose's on his Deborah) anticipatory, for Dr. Benjamin Hoadly, Bishop of Winchester, died in 1761.

performance. But when Miss Clara Thomson began to prepare her excellent and careful life of Richardson (1900), it became a part of her task to examine into this question. She found, first, that Richardson had himself ascribed *Shamela* to Fielding in a letter to "Mrs. Belfour" (Lady Bradshaigh);<sup>1</sup> and she was acute enough to discover, in the pamphlet itself, which appeared some months before *Joseph Andrews*, the suggestive, though not conclusive, fact that "Mr. B." was provisionally transformed into "Mr. Booby." When, in 1902, I was engaged upon my own Memoir of Richardson for the "Men of Letters" series, I was naturally indisposed to connect this undoubtedly clever, but also unquestionably gross production with Fielding, already "unjustly censured," as he complained in the "Preface" to the *Miscellanies* of 1743, for much that he had never written (p. 72). But I must honestly confess that for the present it has been my ill-fortune to discover only corroborative evidence. To a document at South Kensington, in which *Shamela* is mentioned, I found that Richardson had appended, in the tremulous script of his old age :—"Written by Mr. H. Fielding"; and since the publication of my book on Richardson, Mr. Frederick Macmillan has drawn my attention to the fact that a letter written in July 1741, by Mr. T. Dampier, afterwards Sub-Master of Eton and Dean of Durham, to one of the Windhams, contains the following :—"The book that has made the greatest noise lately in the polite world is *Pamela*, a romance in low life. It is thought to contain such excellent precepts, that a learned divine at London<sup>2</sup> recommended it very strongly from the pulpit. . . . The dedication [of Conyers Middleton's *Life of Cicero*] to Lord Hervey has been very justly and prettily ridiculed by Fielding in a dedication to a pamphlet called *Shamela* which he wrote to burlesque the fore-mentioned romance."<sup>3</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence*, 1804, iv. p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> This enables me to correct an error at p. 74. As Miss Thomson points out (*Samuel Richardson*, 1900, p. 31) it was Dr. Benjamin Slocock of St. Saviour's, Southwark, and not Dr. Sherlock, who praised *Pamela* from the pulpit. The mistake seems to have originated with Jeffrey, and was freely repeated.

<sup>3</sup> Hist. MSS. Commission, 12th Report, Appendix, Part IX., p. 204.

shows unmistakably that *Shamela* was attributed to Fielding by contemporary gossip. But then so was *The Causidicade* (p. 112), and *The Apology for the Life of Mr. The Cibber, Comedian* (p. 72). I still cling to the hope that Fielding was not the author of *Shamela*. The matter is examined at some length at pp. 42-45 of the "Men of Letters" Memoir of Richardson; and it is plain that, if Fielding had wished to father it, he would have included it in the *Miscellanies* of 1743.

The remaining points which call for notice are little more than dispersed adversaria. To the *amende honorable* which Fielding made to Richardson in the *Jacobite's Journal* (pp. 113-14) should be added a further passage from the later *Covent-Garden Journal*, No. 10:—"Pleasantry (as the ingenious Author of *Clarissa* says of a Story) should be made only the Vehicle of Instruction." Among other places connected with the composition of *Tom Jones* (p. 118) may be mentioned Widcombe House, Bath (then Mr. Philip Bennet's), a Palladian villa close to the road from Widcombe Hill to Prior Park; and, if we are to believe *Rambles round Edge Hills*, 1896, p. 17, Fielding actually read that work in MS. to Lyttelton and Lord Chatham in the dining-room of Radway Grange in Warwickshire (Mr. Miller's). It should also be added that the agreement for *Tom Jones* (p. 121), dated 5th March 1749, together with Fielding's antecedent receipt for the money, dated 11th June 1748, of which in 1883 I could obtain no tidings, are (or were lately) in the Huth collection. But perhaps the most important item which has come to light since 1883 is the Will discovered in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury by Mr. George A. Aitken. It is undated, though it was evidently executed at Ealing in the novelist's last days, and runs as follows:—

"In the name of God Amen. I Henry Fielding of the Parish of Ealing in the County of Middlesex do hereby give and bequeath unto Ralph Allen of Prior Park in the County of Somerset Esq<sup>r</sup>. and to his heirs executors administrators and assigns for ever for the use of the said Ralph his heirs, &c. all my estate real and personal and whatsoever and do appoint him sole executor of this my last will Beseeching



him that the whole (except my share in the Register Office) may be sold and forthwith converted into money and annuities purchased thereout for the lives of my dear wife Mary and my daughters Harriet and Sophia and what proportions my said executor shall please to reserve to my sons William and Allen shall be paid them severally as they shall attain the age of twenty and three. And as for my shares in the Register or Universal Register Office I give ten thereof to my aforesaid wife seven to my daughter Harriet and three to my daughter Sophia my wife to be put in immediate possession of her shares and my daughters of theirs as they shall severally arrive at the age of twenty one the immediate profits to be then likewise paid to my two daughters by my executor who is desired to retain the same in his hands until that time. Witness my hand Henry Fielding. Signed and acknowledged as his last will and testament by the within named testator in the presence of Margaret Collier, Rich<sup>d</sup>. Boor, Isabella Ash."

"On the 14th November 1754," comments Mr. Aitken, "administration (with the will annexed) of the goods, &c., of Henry Fielding, at Lisbon, deceased, was granted to John Fielding, Esq., uncle and guardian lawfully assigned to Harriet Fielding, spinster, a minor, and Sophia Fielding, an infant, for the use and benefit and of the minor and infant until they were twenty one; Ralph Allen, Esq., having renounced as well the execution of the will as administration of the goods, &c.; and Mary Fielding, the relict, having also renounced administration of the goods of the deceased.<sup>1</sup>

The Register Office, above mentioned, is that referred to at p. 194. What was the amount of the property so disposed of is not known. But in making inquiries in connexion with an edition of the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* issued by the Chiswick Press in 1892,<sup>2</sup> I discovered that Fielding died possessed of a considerable library (653 lots), which was sold

<sup>1</sup> *Athenæum*, February 1, 1890. A portrait of Mary Fielding by Cotes, described by one who knew it as "a very fine drawing of a very ugly woman," was sold not many years since at Christie's.

<sup>2</sup> This considerably elaborates the first note at p. 179.

in February 1755, "for the Benefit of his Wife and Family," by Samuel Baker of York Street, Covent Garden, realising £364:7:1, or about £100 more than the public gave in 1785 for the books of Johnson. An account of this collection, rich particularly in law, classics, poetry and drama, is given in the third series of my *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*, 1896, pp. 164-178.

A few words, in supplement to those in the "Postscript" (pp. 191-2), may be devoted to Fielding's family. Concerning the daughter Harriet, or Harriot, mentioned in the foregoing will, I am indebted to Colonel W. F. Prideaux for pointing out to me that in Burke's *Landed Gentry*, 1875, vol. ii. p. 938, it is stated that she afterwards became the second wife of Colonel James Gabriel Montresor. As his first wife died in March 1761, when he was more than fifty-eight; and as he afterwards married for the third time, a widow, Mrs. Kemp of Teynham, Kent, it is probable that, as Keightley says, Harriet Montresor was not long-lived.<sup>1</sup> Of the other children spoken of at p. 192, Louisa died in May 1753, being buried from a house in Hammersmith. And this brings me to a final question as to Fielding's sisters. Richardson speaks in August 1749 of being "well acquainted" with four Miss Fieldings; and Murphy and Lawrence both refer to a Catherine and an Ursula of whom Mr. Keightley could learn nothing. With Colonel Prideaux's help, and the kind offices of Mr. Samuel Martin of the Hammersmith Free Library, the matter has now been set at rest. In 1887 the late Sir Leslie Stephen had suggested to me that Catherine and Ursula were probably born at Sharpham Park. This must have been the case, though Keightley had failed to establish it. At all events Catherine and Ursula existed, for they both died in 1750. The Hammersmith Registers at Fulham record the following burials:—

<sup>1</sup> According to Thomas Whitehead's *Original Anecdotes of the late Duke of Kingston and Miss Chudleigh*, 1792, p. 95 (for reference to which I am also indebted to Col. Prideaux), Miss Fielding was, at the date of her marriage, "in a deep decline,"—a circumstance which lends a touch of chivalry to Col. Montresor's devotion. She is said by Whitehead to have been of "a sweet temper, and great understanding."

1750 July 9th, Mrs. Catherine Feilding (*sic*).

1750 Nov. 12th, Mrs. Ursula Fielding.

1750[-1] Feb<sup>y</sup>. 24th, Mrs. Beatrice Fielding.

1753 May 10th, Louisa, d. of Henry Fielding, Esq.

The first three, with Sarah, make up Richardson's "Four worthy Sisters" (p. 140); and the final entry renders it probable that, in May 1753, Fielding was staying in the house at Hammersmith then occupied by his surviving sister, Sarah.

No well-authenticated likeness of Fielding has yet superseded Hogarth's outline (pp. 184-5), nor, if Murphy's statement (*Works*, 1762, i. p. 47) that "no portrait of him had ever been made" previously, be accurate, can any new likeness be looked for. Nevertheless, both at the Guelph (1891) and Georgian (1906) exhibitions, the Hon. Gerald Ponsonby exhibited a portrait of Fielding; and another is included in the picture attributed to Hogarth (also shown at the latter exhibition, and lately belonging to Sir Charles Tennant), of the "Green Room, Drury Lane." There is also a bust (posthumous) by W. F. Woodington at Eton. And this reminds me that no more fitting tail-piece to this Appendix can be conceived than the compact and penetrating lines which the late James Russell Lowell composed as an inscription for the bust of Henry Fielding at Taunton:—

"He looked on naked nature unashamed,  
And saw the Sphinx, now bestial, now divine,  
In change and re-change; he nor praised nor blamed,  
But drew her as he saw with fearless line.  
Did he good service? God must judge, not we.  
Manly he was, and generous and sincere;  
English in all, of genius blithely free:  
Who loves a Man may see his image here."

A. D.

March 1907.

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## CHAPTER I.

### EARLY LIFE.

MARY ANN EVANS, as her father recorded in his diary, was born at Arbury Farm, at five o'clock in the morning of 22nd November 1819.<sup>1</sup> Her father, Robert Evans, was son of George Evans, a builder and carpenter in Derbyshire. The family had migrated thither from Northop in Flintshire. Robert Evans was brought up to his father's business, and improved his position by remarkable qualities. He possessed great vigour both of mind and body, and was one of the men to whom love of good work is a religion. Once, when two labourers were waiting for a third to enable them to carry a heavy ladder, he took the whole weight upon his own shoulders, and astonished them by carrying it to its destination without help. He had also the keen eye of a skilful workman, and was especially famous for a power of calculating with singular accuracy the quantity of timber in a standing tree. He acquired the highest character for integrity and thorough devotion to his employers' interests. His extensive knowledge in very varied practical

<sup>1</sup> She called herself Marian.



departments, as his daughter says, "made his services valued through several counties. He had large knowledge of mines, of plantations, of various branches of valuation and measurement—of all that is essential to the management of large estates." He was regarded as a unique land-agent, and was able by giving his own services to save the special fees usually paid by landowners for expert opinions. His education had been imperfect, and this led to some self-distrust and "submissiveness in his domestic relations." The last peculiarity is reflected in the character of Mr. Garth in *Middlemarch*; and Mr. Garth and Adam Bede are obviously in some degree representative of the same type—one, it is to be feared, which has not become commoner since his time. About 1799 Robert Evans was agent to Mr. Francis Newdigate of Kirk Hallam in Derbyshire, under whom he also held a farm. In 1806, upon the death of Sir Roger Newdigate, Francis Newdigate inherited a life interest in the Arbury estate in Warwickshire, and Evans accompanied him thither in his old capacity. Colonel Newdigate, son of Francis, was much impressed by the merits of his father's agent, and through the colonel's influence Evans became agent to various other great landowners in the district. As became his position, Robert Evans was a sturdy Tory. He shared the patriotic sentiment of the days of Nelson and Wellington, and held that a revolutionary fanatic was a mixture of fool and scoundrel. "I was accustomed," says his daughter, "to hear him utter the word 'Government' in a tone that charged it with awe and made it part of my effective religion in contrast with the word 'rebel,' which seemed to carry the stamp of evil in its syllables,

and, lit by the fact that Satan was the first rebel, made an argument dispensing with more detailed inquiry." "Government," for practical purposes, meant the great landowners, who had good reasons for returning his respect. One of them requires a moment's notice.

Sir Roger Newdigate,<sup>1</sup> the previous owner of Arbury, was a typical specimen of the more cultivated country gentleman of his day. In early life he had made the "grand tour," and had brought back ancient marbles and architectural drawings. He afterwards accepted the active duties of his position. He represented the University of Oxford for thirty years (1750-1780) as a high Tory. He was an owner of collieries and a promoter of canals. He built a school and a poorhouse for the parish in which Arbury Park is situated—Chilvers-Coton, near Nuneaton. He rebuilt Arbury House, which stood on the site of an ancient priory, in the "Gothic style" and adorned it with works of art and family portraits by Romney and Reynolds. His name at least is familiar to all Oxford men by the prize poem which he founded just before his death. The conditions prescribed by him for the competition show as much sense as can be expected from the founder of a prize poem. There were to be no compliments to himself, and the length of the poems was to be limited to fifty lines. Horace and King David, as he remarked, had succeeded in confining their noblest compositions within that length, and the quality of the future prize poems would probably not be such as to make us desire more of them than of

<sup>1</sup> See *The Cheverels of Cheverel Manor*, by Lady Newdigate-Newdigate, 1898.

the psalms or odes. Sir Roger died thirteen years before the birth of Evans's daughter; but certain family stories in which he was concerned were handed down to her, and, as we shall see, suggested one of her most finished pieces of work. Robert Evans's first wife, Harriet Poynton, had been for "many years," as her epitaph says, "the friend and servant of the family of Arbury." She had married Evans in 1801, and died in 1809, leaving two children. In 1813 Evans married a woman of rather superior position, Christiana Pearson, by whom he had three children—Christiana, Isaac, and Mary-Ann—Christiana being about five, and Isaac about three years older than the youngest child. In March 1820, when Mary Ann was four months old, the Evanses moved to Griff, "a charming red brick, ivy-covered house on the Arbury estate." It was to be the child's home for the first twenty-one years of her life.

The impressions made upon the girl during these years are sufficiently manifest in the first series of her novels. Were it necessary to describe the general characteristics of English country life, they would enable the "graphic" historian to give life and colour to the skeleton made from statistical and legal information. The *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, *Silas Marner*, and *The Mill on the Floss*, probably give the most vivid picture now extant of the manners and customs of the contemporary dwellers in the midland counties of England. There is a temptation to press the likeness further. It is a favourite amusement of readers to identify characters in novels with historical individuals. They sometimes seem to think that the question whether (for example) Caleb Garth

"was" Robert Evans can be answered by a simple Yes or No, like the question whether Junius was Philip Francis. In reality, of course, it is generally impossible to say precisely how far the portrait may have been studied from a single model, or modified intentionally, or by blending with more or less conscious reminiscences of other originals. George Eliot (as it will be convenient to call her hereafter from her name in letters), like all good novelists, generally avoided direct delineation of individuals; while, on the other hand, it is probable enough that she was sometimes following the facts more closely than she was herself aware. It is enough to say here that her mother had a "considerable dash of the Mrs. Poyser vein in her"; that her mother's family more or less stood for the Dodsons in the *Mill on the Floss*; that her relations to her brother resembled those of Maggie to Tom Tulliver in the same novel; and that when describing Celia and Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch* she was more or less recalling her relations to her elder sister Christiana. There is one person, however, whom a novelist can hardly help revealing directly or indirectly; and in the case of George Eliot the revelation is unequivocal. There is no doubt, as we shall see, that the *Mill on the Floss* is substantially autobiographical, not, of course, a statement of facts, but as a vivid embodiment of the early impressions and the first stages of spiritual development. The scanty framework of fact may be partly filled up from this source.

It is proper, however, at the present day to begin from the physical "environment" of the organism whose history we are to study. The Warwickshire



landscape is not precisely stimulating: and if the county can boast of the greatest name in English literature, it must be remembered that Shakespeare had the good fortune to migrate to the centre of intellectual activity at an early period. Though the central watershed of England passes through the country, it has no mountain ridges, and the streams crawl off through modest undulations to more picturesque districts. In her twenty-first year George Eliot speaks of a little excursion in which she has (for the first time apparently) "gazed on some—albeit the smallest—of the 'everlasting hills,'" and has admired "those noblest children of the earth—fine healthy trees." She has seen, too, a fine parish church and Lichfield Cathedral. Through her childhood she had to put up with canals instead of rivers; and saw no wilder open spaces than the decorous lawns of Arbury Park. Far away in the north, the Brontë children—of whom Charlotte, the eldest, was her senior by three years—were spending their strange childhood in Haworth, learning to worship Nature on the Yorkshire moors, and to idealise the sturdy, crabbed, North-countrymen into Rochesters and Heathcliffs. We may speculate if we please upon the effects which might have followed if the habitats of the two families could have been exchanged. If we may trust their portrayers, the fat midland pastures were hardly more different from the Yorkshire moors than the stolid farmers of Warwickshire from the rough population of the West Riding.

"Our midland plains," said George Eliot, "have never lost their familiar expression and conservative spirit for me; yet at every other mile, since I first

looked on them, some sign of world-wide change, some new direction of human labour, has wrought itself into what one may call the speech of the landscape." The scenery, a monotonous succession of little ups and downs, is of the kind which owes its interest to its subordination to human society. In George Eliot's writings, there are proofs enough of sensibility to natural beauty, but the scenery is a background to the actors; and there is no indication of such a passion for her native district as Scott felt for his "honest grey hills." The "midland plains" were "conservative," because they spoke of ancient order and peace; and the opening pages of *Felix Holt* describe the scenery and explain its significance. The traveller of those days, seated by the side of one of Mr. Weller's colleagues, whirling at the amazing speed of ten miles an hour across the plain whence the waters flow to the Avon and the Trent, had yet time to read many indications of English life in the characteristic landscape. He saw broad meadows with their long lines of willows marking the water-courses; and cornfields divided by the straggling hedgerows, economically wasteful but beautiful with their bushes of hawthorn and dog-roses. He came upon remote hamlets, abodes of dirt and ignorance, each knowing of the world which lay beyond its "own patch of earth and sky" only by intercourse with "big, bold, gin-breathing tramps." But at times also he passed through "trim cheerful villages," where the cottage gardens bloomed with wall-flowers and geraniums, and the blacksmith and the wheelwright were plying their cheerful trades. Solid farmers were jogging past from their comfortable homesteads, where quaint yew-tree arbours were backed by the great

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cornstacks. At intervals appeared the squires' statelier mansions, embowered in the patrician trees of his park, and hard by the grey old churches with sleep-compelling pews were the parsonages where the squire's younger son was quartered, not yet prescient of the "movement," and free at least from "too much zeal." In such districts the eighteenth century calm lingered pleasantly, and the ideal types represented by Sir Roger de Coverley and the Vicar of Wakefield, or by Squire Western and Trulliber, might still be recognised. A Sir Roger Newdigate had acquired a taste, and here and there clerical calm was being ruffled by Evangelical or Methodist agitation. But the district was one of "protuberant optimists, sure that Old England was the best of all possible countries, and that if there were any facts which had not fallen under their own observation they were facts not worth observing." The traveller, it is true, might soon come upon a very different scene. The coach would emerge from the deep-rutted lanes into a village "dingy with coal-dust, noisy with the shaking of looms," or "would rattle over the pavement of a manufacturing town, the scene of riots and trade-union meetings." The land around him was blackened with coal-pits, and the population was by no means convinced that all change must be for the worse; and yet these busy scenes seemed "to make but crowded nests in the midst of the large-spaced, slow-moving life of homestead and far-away cottages and oak-sheltered parks." In the quiet agricultural region, squire and parson, and the whole social machinery of which they represented the mainspring, could still be accepted as part of the unalterable system of things. The villager

was too ignorant even to conceive the possibility of change; and if the farmer grumbled over the ruinous results of peace, he retained his traditional reverence for the old families, and looked with horror upon proposals for the intrusion of railways or manufacturing demands for free trade. If the upper social stratum was aware that in the great towns there were Radicals demanding the abolition of the House of Lords and the confiscation of Church property, it inferred that the demon of revolution had not been completely exorcised, but could still hope that, with the help of the great Duke, the evil spirit might be confined to his proper region, and the British Constitution be upheld as the pride and envy of the world.

In due time George Eliot was to portray various phases of the society around her, including the Radical as well as the fine old Tory. In her childhood, of course, she took the colouring of her surroundings. To the infant the arrangements of its nursery are as unalterable as the laws of the solar system and the existence of any other order inconceivable. Her world was the fireside of Griff; and if she had glimpses of the outside, the views of Mr. Robert Evans represented ultimate truth, or were taken as indisputable assertions of matter of fact. He was fond of his little girl, and took her for occasional outings in his gig, or on expeditions to neighbouring country towns. The family circle was small. Soon after her birth, her mother's health became weak; the elder girl, Christiana, was sent to school; and Mary Ann with her brother spent part of every day at a dame-school close to their own gates. She did not show any remarkable precocity, though she was both a thoughtful and a very affec-



tionate and sensitive child. Her brother became naturally the first object of her devotion, and devotion to some one was throughout her life a marked need of her nature. While still under five years old, she went through the experiences more or less idealised in the *Mill on the Floss*, and more historically commemorated in the series of sonnets called *Brother and Sister*. She tells in the poems how she rambled with him through the meadows; across the rivulet hidden by tangled forget-me-nots; through the rookery and by the "brown canal," where the barges seemed to bring intimations of an unknown world beyond. In the copse, there were traces of the "mystic gypsies," where Mr. Petulengro perhaps had encamped, though when she actually met him—if the narrative in the *Mill on the Floss* be authentic history—he was a less romantic being than we should judge from his behaviour in *Lavengro*. Then, too, she had the wonderful adventure of catching a perch by mistake, which suggests the inevitable moral, namely, that "luck was with glory wed." The early hero-worship of the little girl running like a puppy after the slightly bigger brother is simply and touchingly described. "School parted us," she says; and she never found that childish world again.

'But were another childish world my share,  
I would be born a little sister there.'

Her brother was sent to school when she was five years old; and as her mother was still in bad health, she was sent to join her sister at a school kept by a Miss Lathom at Attleboro, a village only a mile or two distant from Griff. She continued there for three or four years, spending her Sundays at home. Her chief

memory of this part of her life was the difficulty of getting a seat near the fireplace in cold weather. Her health was low, it seems, and she suffered from the nightly terrors which haunt delicate children, and which she has ascribed to Gwendolen Harleth. "All her soul," she said, "became a quivering fear." The other pupils, however, made a pet of their small companion, and she was not unhappy. She began to read such books as then came in the way of children. In one of them, called *The Linnæus's Life*, she afterwards wrote a few words, stating that it was the first present from her father which she could remember, and recording her early delight in its pages. She remembered, too, her absorption in *Aesop's Fables*, and laughed heartily over the pleasure she had taken in the humour of "Mercury and the Statue Seller." A stray volume of *Joe Miller* supplied her with anecdotes wherewith to astonish her family. In those days children were less distracted by miscellaneous scraps of print, and could pore over the same thumbed and dogs-eared favourites. In her eighth or ninth year she was sent to a larger school, kept by a Miss Wallington at Nuneaton. Here there were some thirty boarders, and she became especially intimate with Miss Lewis, the principal governess. Her passion for reading developed rapidly. A stray *Waverley* came in her way; and when that was returned to its owner before she had finished it, she began writing out the story for herself, till her elders got it back for her. She was fascinated by an extract from Lamb's *Captain Jackson* even in an almanac; and among her favourite books were Defoe's *History of the Devil*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Rasselas*. By this time it was beginning to be understood that there was something

remarkable about the child. She excited the admiration of the home-circle by acting charades with her brother during the holidays; and if not a decided "prodigy," was clearly capable of absorbing such intellectual influences as could be found in Warwickshire. In her thirteenth year she was transferred to a school at Coventry. It was kept by two ladies named Franklin, daughters of a Baptist minister, who had for many years preached in a chapel at Coventry. He lived in a house "almost exactly resembling that of Rufus Lyon in *Felix Holt*." Lyon's character and some of his little personal peculiarities were also suggested by this original. George Eliot was always grateful to the daughters for the excellence of their teaching. She was at once recognised as the most promising of their pupils. Her themes were kept for the private edification of her teachers, instead of being read in the class like those of her comrades. She had good masters in French and German and music. She was sometimes called upon to display her musical skill before visitors, as the best performer in the school; and obeyed with ready good humour, though suffering agonies of shyness. The love of music generally shows itself at an early age, but she had apparently some difficulty in yielding to the passion. Three years after leaving school, she attended an oratorio at Coventry, and says in a letter that she thinks it will be her last. She declares that she has "no soul for music," and is a "tasteless person." She therefore is not qualified to discuss the question of the "propriety or lawfulness of such exhibitions of talent." For herself, she would not regret if music were strictly confined to purposes of worship; and cannot think that "a

pleasure that wishes the devotion of all the time and powers of an immortal being to the acquirement of an expertness in so useless . . . an accomplishment can be quite pure and elevating in its tendency." The religious theory is, as we shall see, characteristic; but it is singular that a woman who was to find one of her greatest delights in music, and who was already skilled in the art, should think herself devoid of the capacity. Two years later, indeed, she was moved to "hysterical sobbing" by another oratorio. She was always diffident and easily discouraged; and these reflections may mean merely an attack of low spirits. Perhaps the want of "soul" meant only the absence of a specific aptitude for the musician's calling; or, possibly, the singing at Coventry was out of tune.<sup>1</sup>

George Eliot left school finally at the end of 1835. Her mother was failing in health, and died in the summer of 1836, after a long illness, during which she was nursed by her daughters. In the following spring the elder daughter, Christiana, married Mr. Edward Clarke, a surgeon in Warwickshire, and Mary Ann undertook the charge of her father's household at Griff. She set her mind to the work, and became, it is said, an "exemplary housewife." She also exerted herself in promoting various charitable works, and continued to study Italian, German, and music. Her brother was now beginning to take a share in their father's busi-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. A. White of New York has kindly shown me a letter to another friend in which George Eliot speaks of the same oratorio. It might be urged, she admits, that such exhibitions show "the beautiful powers of the human voice when carried to the highest point of improveability." But such reasoning would compel us to admit "opera-dancing, horseracing, and even intemperance."



ness; and found his chief relaxation from hard work in hunting—an amusement which was not in his sister's line. He had also become a High Churchman, whereas she was strongly Evangelical. Although, therefore, the family was bound by ties of warm affection, she found little sympathy in her favourite occupations. She lived in intellectual solitude, conscious of abilities for which she could find no definite outlet, and with no one in her immediate circle capable of guiding or even appreciating her pursuits. When long afterwards an autobiography was suggested to her, she replied: "The only thing I should much care to dwell on [in regard to this period] would be the absolute despair I suffered from of ever being able to do anything. No one could ever have felt greater despair, and a knowledge of this might be a help to some other struggler." On the other hand, she added with a smile, "it might only lead to an increase of bad writing."

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30 The account of George Eliot's school days may perhaps suggest that the state of female education in Warwickshire was not altogether so bad as energetic modern reformers are apt to assume. There is, it is true, something of a quaint old-fashioned colouring about the system. Her comrades at Miss Franklin's thought that she was competent "to get up something in the way of a clothing club"; and beyond that limited prospect, they may possibly have dared to hope that she might develop into a Mrs. Chapone or Miss Carter—capable of writing letters "upon the improvement of the human mind," or possibly, in time, of translating Epictetus. She was not, indeed, competent to take a first-class in a University examination, or to enter any career for which such honours qualified the

nobler sex; and yet, if we really believed what we are so often told, that the test of a good education is not the stock of knowledge acquired, but the stimulus given to mental activity, the schooling seems to have been successful enough. Her intellectual curiosity was roused, though not yet fixed upon any definite object. From the correspondence which she kept up with her early governess, Miss Lewis, it seems that she read a great deal of miscellaneous literature during sixteen years at Griff. My mind, she says in 1839, presents "an assemblage of disjointed specimens of history, ancient and modern; scraps of poetry picked up from Shakespeare, Cowper, Wordsworth, and Milton; newspaper topics; morsels of Addison and Bacon, Latin verbs, geometry, entomology, and chemistry; Reviews and metaphysics—all arrested and petrified and smothered by the fast-thickening everyday accession of actual events, relative anxieties, and household cares and vexations. How deplorably and unaccountably evanescent are our frames of mind, as various as forms and hues of the summer clouds!" For a girl of nineteen, both the style and the variety of intellectual interests indicated are remarkable. A genius, it may be suggested, can thrive anywhere; and so long as it is not absolutely fettered, can derive nourishment from any set of materials that may come in its way. There is, however, a special characteristic of George Eliot which already appears. A strong imaginative impulse is generally developed early; it is an overmastering faculty which forces its possessor into activity often before knowledge or serious thought has accumulated; draws romances, epic poems, and dramas from children in their teens; and suggests

that not only the material surroundings, but even the storage of intellectual accomplishments is but an accidental stimulus to the innate creative power. Charlotte and Emily Brontë, for example, informed the world around them with so much passion and imagination, that we fancy that any other circumstances would have served for an incentive to powers only waiting to be set at liberty. George Eliot, diffident in character, and reflective as much as imaginative in intellect, developed slowly, and was for many years ignorant of her own truest powers. She had a full share of the feminine docility, which is so charming to teachers—especially of the other sex. Women really enjoy lectures, strange as the taste appears to the male at all ages. Even a clever boy generally regards his schoolmaster as a natural enemy, and begins as a rebel. The girl takes the master at his own valuation, or something more, and has an innocent belief that lessons give really desirable information. George Eliot was clearly of this way of thinking; and though she must have been aware of possessing unusual ability, she was anxious to bow submissively to the best instructors. At Griff or in her circle at Coventry no very brilliant intellectual light was shining, nor did even a very clear understanding prevail as to the real lights of contemporary thought. People had not taken to reading the last German authorities; and had vague enough impressions as to the course of European speculation. Miss Lewis and the Miss Franklins were ardent Evangelicals; and the Evangelical school of the day, though not given to philosophy, representing at least the most socially active party in the Church, was so far attractive to her

intellectually. It meant at any rate a protest against stagnation. Then, moreover, through life she had very deep religious sentiments, and for the present associated them with the Evangelical dogma. She was greatly impressed by the wife of her father's younger brother, Mrs. Samuel Evans, a Methodist preacher, of whom I shall presently have to speak again. "I shall not only suffer, but be delighted to receive the word of exhortation," she writes to her aunt in 1839, "and I beg you not to withhold it." The most curious of her letters in these years is one to Miss Lewis, discussing with a quaint gravity the ethics of reading fiction. She is good enough to admit that certain standard works must be read—Scott, for example, and *Don Quixote*—otherwise one would not understand common allusions. Shakespeare, too, is inevitable, though one must be as nice as the bee "to suck nothing but honey from his pages." A teacher, too, may consider it desirable to read fiction by way of tasting for her pupils. But it is dangerous to make trial on oneself of a cup because it is suspected of being poisonous. She herself has suffered from the poison. Her early reading of novels, lent by kind friends, led her to castle-building, which she apparently thinks a pernicious habit. No one, of course, "ever dreamed of recommending" novels to children; but men and women are but children of a larger growth. They cannot be sure at any age of resisting the evil influences. Nothing can be learned from novels which cannot be better learned from history; and when she is driven to tears by the impossibility of learning more than a fraction of realities, can she "have any time to spend on things that never



existed"? It is plain that in those days aesthetic prophets had not begun to expound the true relations of art and morality; and many young ladies of nineteen at the present day would consider themselves competent to open the eyes of this didactic young person. Her views changed in good time; but the moral earnestness which prompted these rather crude remarks was a permanent characteristic. Meanwhile, if her scruples hindered her from acquiring a wide knowledge upon the novels of the day, she was spending her time to better purpose in the miscellaneous reading already noticed. Wordsworth, it may be observed, was an early favourite to whom she remained faithful through life, and appealed to her as, shortly before, he had appealed, though still more strongly, to J. S. Mill. She was much impressed, too, by Young's *Night Thoughts*, an edifying work which in later years she criticised with the severity of a revolted disciple. Her studies naturally took a theological direction. She begins with Hannah More and Wilberforce, and is presently interested by the controversies aroused by the Oxford movement. "She cannot make up her mind as to the solution. She reads an essay on "Schism" by Professor Hoppus of the London University, and the Evangelical Milner's *Church History*. She compares their views with those of *The Portrait of an English Churchman*, by W. Gresley, an early champion of "Tractarianism," and finds that the Tracts themselves show a "confused appreciation of the great doctrine of justification." They approach too nearly to the Church marked by the "prophetical epithets" of "the scarlet beast" and the "Mystery of Iniquity." The authors, it is true, are zealous, learned,

As she who  
in a church  
from divine  
of passion

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and devoted, but "Satan is too crafty to commit his cause into the hands of those who have nothing to recommend them to approbation." She is pleased, however, by the *Lyra Apostolica* and the "sweet poetry" of the *Christian Year*. She is presently much impressed by the work upon *Ancient Christianity and the Oxford Tracts*, by Isaac Taylor, "one of the most eloquent, acute, and pious of writers." She has "gulped it in a most reptile-like fashion," but must "chew it thoroughly to facilitate its assimilation with her mental frame." She is attracted, too, by the "stirring eloquence" of *The Great Teacher*, written by John Harris, a popular writer of the time, with liberal tendencies, who was afterwards principal of an Independent College. These studies, it must be remembered, represent her state of mind before the completion of her twenty-first year. She was soon to come under new influences. Meanwhile she was already ambitious enough to propose to make a practical application of her reading, and planned a "chart" of ecclesiastical history, with columns showing the dates of the principal personages, events, schisms, and so forth, with perhaps one for the fulfilment of the prophecies. Happily a chart was published by some one else which extinguished hers, and she turned to other studies. A different result of her meditations was a poem, which, though not her first attempt at poetry, was the first published. It is a farewell to the world, of which this is a specimen :

"Books that have been to me as chests of gold,  
Which, miserlike, I secretly have told,  
And for them love, health, friendship, peace have sold,  
Farewell !

Blest Volume ! whose clear truth-writ page once known  
Fades not before heaven's sunshine and hell's moan,  
To thee I say not, of earth's gifts alone,

Farewell !

Then shall my new-born senses find new joy,  
New sounds, new sights, my ears and eyes employ,  
Nor fear that word that here brings sad alloy,

Farewell !"

The editor of the *Christian Observer*, in which the lines appeared (January 1840), adds a note to the effect that in heaven we shall be able to do without the Bible. The verses, however, if suspected of this trifling heresy, show religious feeling much more distinctly than poetical power, in which they resemble most sacred poetry.

## CHAPTER II.

### COVENTRY.

WHEN George Eliot was just twenty-one a change took place in her life which was to produce most important results. Her brother had married, and it was arranged that he should take over his father's business at Griff. Mr. Robert Evans, now sixty-six, with his daughter migrated to Coventry. They took a semi-detached house in the Foleshill Road, with a "good bit of garden round it," and commanding a wide reach of country, though the view was disfigured by mills and chimneys in the foreground. The secluded agricultural district was exchanged for an energetic manufacturing town, and George Eliot was gaining a new set of experiences, to be turned to account in good time. Hitherto her life had been one of intellectual isolation, though she had been encouraged by the sympathy of Miss Lewis. She had aspirations as well as reflections, and complains to her Methodist aunt that her "besetting sin was ambition—a desire insatiable for the esteem of my fellow-creatures. This seems the centre whence all my actions proceed." But the powers of which she was conscious were choked in the confined atmosphere where men, as Johnson's friend complained, talked of "runts," that is (according to Boswell) young cows. Dr. Johnson, replied an



admirer, would learn to talk of runts. George Eliot certainly listened to the talk, and then or in memory could perceive its humorous aspect ; but talk confined to runts becomes tiresome in the long run ; and when her loftiest hope was to compile a historical chart, she must have felt a painful need for some better end for her energies. Some one who would share her interests and direct her aspirations was obviously desirable if she was to escape from the diffident "despair" into which she was tempted to sink. Coventry could hardly be described, I imagine, as a Warwickshire Athens, or even Edinburgh ; but at Coventry, as it happened, there were some people of much wider outlook than could have been expected. Charles Bray (1811-1884) was a ribbon manufacturer and a man of energy and philanthropic aims. He was a disciple of George Combe the phrenologist, whose *Constitution of Man* had a great influence at this time, though not much recognised by the authoritative expounders of philosophy. Bray himself in 1841 published *The Philosophy of Necessity*, intended to apply Combe's scientific principles to the regeneration of society. Like George and Andrew Combe, he sympathised with Robert Owen the Socialist, and took a special interest in the attempt to found a community at Queenwood. Upon its failure he took a part in less ambitious schemes for the improvement of the working classes. In 1836 Bray married Caroline, sister of Charles and Sara Hennell. The Hennells had been brought up as Unitarians ; and after his sister's marriage to Bray, a thoroughgoing sceptic, Charles Hennell undertook to examine the evidences of Christianity with a view to meeting his brother-in-law's objections. The result of the examination was that he

became a sceptic himself, and in 1838 published an *Enquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity* in defence of his conclusions. The book is intended to show that Christianity is explicable by purely natural causes. A criticism of the New Testament narrative leads to the conclusion that Jesus was a man of high moral genius, who belonged originally to the sect of the Essenes, and developed their teaching under the influence of the time. Strauss, whose *Life of Christ* had appeared in 1835, procured a translation of Hennell's book into German; and in a preface says that Hennell, although ignorant of recent German criticism, was "on the very track" which the Germans had entered. He had, too, the practical insight of an English man of business, and solved "at one spring" problems over which the German "flutters with many learned formulæ." Hennell treated the subject in the "earnest and dignified tone of the truthseeker"; and, unlike rancorous assailants of Christianity, derived religion, not from priestcraft, but from the essential needs of human nature. George Eliot's admiration for the book is shown by an analysis<sup>1</sup> which she wrote on the occasion of its republication in 1852. She bought a copy soon after going to Coventry, and had read it before she met the Brays. Kingsley mentions it as one of the books which Alton Locke studied as a representative of the "intelligent artisans of the period." Hennell's sister Sara was interested in the same questions, and expounded her doctrines at length in *Present Religion as a Faith owning Fellowship with Thought*. It appeared in three volumes in 1865, 1873, and 1887, and is one of the many attempts to present

<sup>1</sup> Given in *Life*, i. 76-83.

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a philosophical theism in consistence with scientific thought by the help of a doctrine of evolution. I am not qualified to speak of its philosophical merits on the strength of a very superficial inspection, but it is plain that Miss Hennell had read and reflected sufficiently to be accepted by George Eliot as a valuable ally in the sphere of philosophical speculation. Her decided theism led her to criticise Comte with a hostility which separated her opinions from those of her friend. They continued, however, to correspond with mutual respect and affection.

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The Evanses' house in Coventry was next door to that occupied by Mrs. Pears, a sister of Mr. Bray. An acquaintance with her neighbour Mrs. Pears soon ripened into friendship, and led in November 1841 to an introduction to the Brays. A very warm friendship sprang up. Cara and Sara (Mrs. Bray and Miss Hennell) became as sisters to George Eliot, and Mr. Bray her most intimate male friend. The alliance lasted through life, and produced an important correspondence. The effect upon George Eliot's mental development was immediate and remarkable. The little circle at Coventry introduced her to a new world of thought. It became clear that there were regions of speculation into which her respected governess Miss Lewis and her beloved aunt Mrs. Samuel Evans had never entered. A letter to Miss Lewis of 13th November 1841 indicates the change which had come over her, and apparently refers to a recent study of Hennell's *Enquiry*. "My whole soul," she says, "has been engrossed in the most interesting of all inquiries for the last few days, and to what result my thoughts will lead I know not—possibly to one that will startle

you; but my only desire is to know the truth, my only fear to cling to error." She hopes that their "love will not discompose under the influence of separation." "What a pity," she says to the same correspondent a few days later, "that while mathematics are indubitable, immutable, and no one doubts the properties of a triangle or a circle, doctrines infinitely important to man are buried in a charnel heap of bones, over which nothing is heard but the barks and growls of contention." The change of belief thus indicated appears to have been rapid, though there are indications of previous doubts as to her childish creed. By January 1842 it had led to a refusal to go to church, and a consequent family difficulty. It is not surprising that George Eliot should have followed a path which was being taken by many contemporaries; but something must be said of her special position, which was in many ways characteristic. The chief light upon her conversion—if I may use the phrase—comes from another source. George Eliot had been introduced to a family named Sibree by her old school-mistress, Miss Franklin, and came to entertain a high regard for several of its members. The Sibrees were of the Evangelical persuasion. A son, Mr. John Sibree, went to a German university in 1842, and afterwards translated Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, a fact apparently implying that the Brays were not the only inhabitants of Coventry with some taste for philosophical speculation. George Eliot took a fancy to a daughter, Miss Mary Sibree, then a young girl, gave her German lessons, and "talked freely on all subjects," without attempting "directly to unsettle her Evangelical beliefs." Miss Sibree (afterwards Mrs. John Cash) preserved some



interesting records of the intercourse, which show that the change of opinions, if rapid, was not unprepared. Till she left Griff, George Eliot had still used the religious language of her own circle. But the studies which have already been mentioned had raised doubts. Isaac Taylor's book, which she proposed to "assimilate," was in substance an attempt to show that the early Church, to which the Tractarians referred as the embodiment of pure Christianity, was in fact already corrupt. The obvious difficulty of such an argument is to stop at the right point. If the early fathers, to whom Pusey and his friends appealed, were already unworthy of confidence, what is to be said of their predecessors? That was just the line taken by Hennell. He rejects the supernatural explanation in the case of the first teachers as well as in the case of their followers. George Eliot's "chart" already implied an interest in ecclesiastical history which might lead to a criticism of the origins as well as of the later development of the creed. It might be noticed, too, that she was making excursions into scientific reading—Mrs. Somerville's *Connexion of the Physical Sciences*, for example—and would, of course, be interested in the bearing of geology upon the book of Genesis. But the purely intellectual aspect of the question was in a great degree subordinate to other considerations. She told Mrs. Sibree that she had been shocked by the union of low morality with strong religious feeling among the poor, chiefly Methodists, whom she had been in the habit of visiting. There were, it seems, specimens there of the "Holy Willie" type. They held to the Calvinism expressed in his famous prayer—

'O Thou, wha in the heavens dost dwell,  
Wha, as it pleases best Thyself,  
Sends ain to heaven and ten to hell,  
A' for Thy glory,  
And no' for onie guid or ill  
They've done afore Thee!'

and apparently were capable of following his very defective practice. "I do not feel," said a woman convicted of lying, "that I have grieved the Spirit much." "Calvinism," George Eliot is reported to have said at the time, "is Christianity; and that granted, it is a religion based on pure selfishness." I need not ask whether Christianity can be identified with Calvinism, or whether antinomianism or pure egoism be in reality a logical deduction from Calvinism. Anyhow, it is clear that she might be led to one conclusion. Since Mrs. Samuel Evans and the lying old woman held the same dogmatic creed, it followed that Mrs. Evans' lovely moral nature could not be the product of the dogmas. Other reflections tended to the same result. Robert Hall, she said, had been made unhappy for a week by reading Miss Edgeworth's *Tales*. In them the characters led good, useful, and pleasant lives without reference to the cares and fears of religion. They were, in fact, model Utilitarians. When George Eliot was asked in later life what influence had unsettled her orthodoxy, she replied, "Walter Scott's!" Scott has generally been credited with a different influence. His romantic tendency was one of the causes, according to Newman, the highest authority on the point, which led to the reaction towards the mediæval Church. George Eliot sympathised with another, and perhaps a really deeper, characteristic of his writings. Scott was a man of sympathies wide enough to do justice to

many different types. He hated the fanaticism of the Covenanters, and speaks of them in his letters as scarcely human except in outward form. Yet he was too good an artist to yield to his antipathies; and in *Old Mortality* and the *Heart of Midlothian* has drawn the most striking pictures of the iron heroism and stern morality of the sect. George Eliot would have taken a similar view of Balfour of Burley and Davie Deans. But, in a wider sense, it is obvious that while Scott sincerely respects religious feelings and sympathises with belief, he shows as little sectarian zeal as Shakespeare. The division between good and bad does not correspond in his pages with the division between any one Church and its antagonists. The qualities which he really admires—manliness, patriotism, unflinching loyalty, and purity of life—are to be found equally among Protestants and Catholics, Roundheads and Cavaliers. The wide sympathy which sees good and bad on all sides makes it difficult to accept any version of the doctrine which supposes salvation to be associated with the acceptance of a dogma. That clearly was George Eliot's frame of mind. She would not directly attack her young friend's Evangelicism, but she smiled in the kindest way at the doctrine that there could be no true morality without it. "The great lesson of life," she said, "is tolerance," and a width of sympathy was perhaps her most characteristic quality. Her revolt from orthodox views was therefore unaccompanied by the bitterness which often accompanies the emancipation from the strictness of a sectarian tyranny. She continued to revere her aunt; only she had made up her mind that the beauty of character was in no sense the product of

the creed. Nor, on the other hand, had it produced the immorality of coarse hypocrites. Taken literally and seriously, the dogmas might tend to suppress and trammel the emotional nature; but, in point of fact, beautiful souls manage to turn even their creeds to account by an unconscious logical artifice which leaves the dark side out of sight and dwells upon the higher and gentler aspirations embodied.

Her first recognition of a change of creed engendered a passing aggressiveness. A Baptist minister was induced by Miss Franklin to attempt a recovery of the lost sheep. "That young lady," he said, "must have had the devil at her elbow to suggest doubts, for there was not a book that I recommended to her in support of Christian evidences that she had not read." The phrase is a little ambiguous, and may be taken to attribute the books on the evidences to the devil's suggestion. "I have attended the University sermon for forty years," said a well-known Squire Bedell, "and I thank God that I am still a Christian." An unconvincing refutation is apt to be irritating, and for a time George Eliot was stimulated to the combative mood. Her father was a "churchman of the old school." His religious notions partook of those ascribed in the *Mill on the Floss* to Mr. Tulliver and the Dodsons. They, we are told, had the strongest respect for whatever was customary, including an acceptance of the rites of the Established Church; though their "theory of life" had "the very slightest tincture of theology." Mr. Evans was so much annoyed by his daughter's abandonment of churchgoing, that he resolved to give up the house at Coventry and to



Charles Hennell. Dr. Brabant was a personal friend of Strauss, and his daughter had undertaken a translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, for which funds were provided by Joseph Parkes (well known as a Radical politician) and others. Before her marriage she gave up the task, which was transferred to George Eliot in January 1844. For the next two years George Eliot's energies were absorbed in this task. Translating in general is not very exhilarating work, nor Strauss's book specially exhilarating to translate. Before the book was finished she was often depressed, and towards the end thoroughly bored. She was encouraged by Sara Hennell when she had ceased to "sit down to Strauss with any relish," and was longing for proof sheets to convince her that her "soul-stupefying labour" would not be thrown away. She worked, however, in the most conscientious way, and finally achieved an admirable and workmanlike translation. Dull as the labour was, the continual effort at accurate reproduction was probably of some use to her English style. Whether her father knew of her employment, or thought that her churchgoing made amends for her share in propagating scepticism, is not recorded. She seems from her letters to have accepted Strauss's general position, though now and then she had qualms. She says, writes Mrs. Bray in 1846, that "she is Strauss-sick; it makes her ill dissecting the beautiful story of the Crucifixion, and only the sight of the Christ image" (a statuette after Thorwaldsen in her study) "and picture made her endure it." To others the image might perhaps have suggested rather remonstrance than encouragement. The book appeared, without the translator's name, in June 1846.

Her father's health was now beginning to break, and her time was much occupied for the next three years by her devoted care of him. She did all the nursing herself, and is reported to have done it admirably. In the later part of the time she found some distraction in beginning a translation of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Her letters give a few indications of her thoughts upon the outward events of an exciting time. She sympathised warmly with the French Revolution of 1848, and admired Lamartine and Louis Blanc. She shows, however, some misgiving, and is depressed by the contrast between French enthusiasts and their English sympathisers. Englishmen have a much larger proportion of "selfish radicalism and unsatisfied brute sensuality than of perception or desire of justice"; and a revolution here would be simply destructive. A little later she is made melancholy by the tone of the newspapers about Louis Blanc: "The day will come when there will be a temple of white marble, where sweet incense and anthems shall rise to the memory of every man and woman who has had . . . a clear vision of the time when this miserable reign of Mammon shall end." She has, she says, been wrought into fury "by the loathsome fawning, the transparent hypocrisy, the systematic giving as little as possible for as much as possible, that one meets with here at every turn. I feel that society is training men and women for hell." In this high-wrought and pessimistic frame of mind she speaks with remarkable enthusiasm of Rousseau and George Sand. Spite of all that may be said against him, Rousseau's genius has "sent that electric thrill through my intellectual and moral frame which has wakened me to new perceptions, which has

made man and nature a fresh world of thought and feeling to me; and this not by teaching me any new belief." The "rushing mighty wind of his inspiration has so quickened my faculties that I have been able to shape more definitely for myself ideas which had previously dwelt as dim *Ahnungen* in my soul." George Sand has a similar power. "It is sufficient for me as a reason for bowing before her in eternal gratitude to that 'great power of God manifested in her' that I cannot read six pages of hers without feeling that it is given to her to delineate human passion and its results, and (I must say, in spite of your judgment) some of the moral instincts and their tendencies, with such truthfulness, such nicety of discrimination, such tragic power, and withal such loving gentle humour, that one might live a century with nothing but one's own dull faculties and not know so much as those six pages will suggest." She adds that she has just acquired a "most delightful" *De Imitatione Christi*, with quaint woodcuts—a book which affected Maggie Tulliver in the same way. "It makes one long to be a saint for a few months. Verily, its piety has its foundations in the depth of the dumb human soul." One may note, too, in passing, her delight in *Sir Charles Grandison*. "The morality," she says, "is perfect—there is nothing for the new lights to correct." During this period she must have been accumulating the experience to be turned to account in *Middlemarch*. It is curious to contrast the tone of that book with the passionate enthusiasm for such prophets of sentimentalism as Richardson, Rousseau, or George Sand. But of this I must speak hereafter.

She was meanwhile soothing her father's last hours

of consciousness by reading the Waverley novels. He died on the 31st May 1849. "What shall I be without him?" she asks. "It will seem as if a part of my moral nature were gone." Soon afterwards she joined the Brays in a visit to the continent. They went through France to the North of Italy, and returned by Switzerland, where she remained at Geneva. There she stayed from July till March 1850, recovering strength and spirits after the long strain caused by her father's illness. For the greater part of the time she was living with M. and Mme. D'Albert, to both of whom she became strongly attached. M. D'Albert was a man of artistic tastes, and became Conservateur of the Athénée—the National Gallery of Geneva. He afterwards translated several of George Eliot's novels; and the friendship lasted till the end of her life. A fortnight after coming to stay with them, George Eliot says that Mme. D'Albert makes a spoilt child of her, and that she already loves M. D'Albert as "if he were father and brother both. It is so delightful to get among people who exhibit no meannesses, no worldlinesses, that one may well be enthusiastic." In fact, she had fortunately fallen into a thoroughly congenial circle; and her characteristic craving for affection had been satisfied by worthy objects. She admired the beauties of Geneva, had a little quiet and refined society, and left Spinoza's *Tractatus* on the shelf. She attended certain lectures of Professor De la Rive on "Experimental Physics," which we will hope were cheering, but otherwise resigned herself to judicious relaxation. She found, in fact, that Geneva was in itself superior to Coventry, though there were some people at Coventry "better than lake, trees, and



mountains." But for them, she would think with a shudder of returning to England. "It looks to me like a land of gloom, of *ennui*, of platitude, but in the midst of all this it is the land of duty and affection; and the only ardent hope I have for my future life is to have given to me some woman's duty, some possibility of devoting myself where I may see a daily result of pure calm blessedness in the life of another."

The phrase is significant. She was now thirty years old, and her outlook was sufficiently vague. She had grown to her full intellectual stature. She had read widely and intelligently; and if she had not devoted herself to any special line of inquiry, she was becoming familiar with the world of ideas which were ignored in the early domestic circle. So far, however, there is no appearance of any intention to take up original work. "We fancy," says Mrs. Bray in 1846, that "she must be writing her novel"—apparently, because she "is looking very brilliant just now." But the "novel" appears to be merely conjectural, and her labours upon Strauss had not suggested a possibility of her taking up an independent part in such inquiries. Her diffidence would suggest rightly or wrongly that she was not qualified to contribute to philosophical or critical literature. She was therefore at a loss to find any channel for the store of intellectual energy already enriched by much experience and reflection. A poem, written some years later, suggests a state of mind which may illustrate her position at this period. She describes a "Minor Prophet," a gentleman of Puritan descent who has taken up new ideas with the old dogmatic confidence. He is a phrenologist and a vegetarian, interested in

"psychical research," and fully expecting a regeneration of the world by the adoption of scientific inventions and the elimination of "faulty human types." She smiles sadly at the prospect, and feels "short-sighted pity" for the coming man who

"Will not know half the dear imperfect things  
That move my smiles and tears—will never know  
The fine old incongruities that raise  
My friendly laugh; the innocent conceits  
That, like a needless eyeglass or black patch,  
Give those who wear them harmless happiness;  
The twists and cracks in our poor earthenware  
That touch me to more conscious fellowship  
(I am not myself the finest Parian)  
With my coevals."

She goes on to explain that she is anything but indifferent to hopes for another future—

"The earth yields nothing more divine  
Than high prophetic vision—than the seer  
Who, fasting from man's meaner joy, beholds  
The paths of beauteous order and constructs  
A fairer type, to shame our low content.  
But prophecy is like potential sound  
Which turned to music seems a voice sublime  
From out the soul of light, but turns to noise  
In scannel pipes and makes all ears averse."

She is, she would seem to intimate, distracted between the past and the present; between the old-fashioned Griff and the society of the squires and farmers, narrow and stupid, but somehow picturesque, cordial, and humorous; and the pragmatistical tiresome preacher of scientific or quasi-scientific "fads," who is as undeniably right in his aspirations as he is intolerably

prosaic and harsh in his judgment of his predecessors. Now Mr. Bray clearly did not stand for the minor prophet. George Eliot was far too loyal to her friends not to be a little blind to their defects; and Bray was a man of real sense and ability. Yet the "minor prophet" was a kind of inferior Bray, and among his disciples and colleagues there were plenty of people who showed the ugly side of scientific arrogance and the readiness to substitute a tune upon "scrannel pipes" for the pathetic if imperfect music of the older creeds. George Eliot desired to sympathise with these leaders of progress, but contempt for the past jarred most painfully upon her feelings, and seemed treasonable to the best human affections. The intensely tender and sensitive nature which prompted her longing for some "woman's mission" made her shrink from too close an alliance with the iconoclasts who would indiscriminately condemn things sacred to her memory.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW.

UPON her return from Geneva, George Eliot had gone to the Brays, with whom she stayed for some months. A turning-point in her life was now to occur. The *Westminster Review*, started originally by the Benthamites in their most hopeful days, was in its normal state of insufficient circulation. J. S. Mill had given it up when the decline of the "philosophical radicals" made the management of their organ a thankless task. Since his day it had been in the hands of Mr. Hickson. It was now to be transferred to Mr. Chapman, who hoped to make it an adequate organ for the best liberal thought of the day. He paid a visit to the Brays in October 1850 with Robert William Mackay, an amiable and accomplished man whose chief work, *The Progress of the Intellect*, had just appeared. George Eliot wrote a sympathetic review of this book for the *Westminster Review*. Her article was in the number for January 1851, and was the first writing in which she attempted anything more ambitious than translation. Mackay's aim, as she defines it, was to show that "divine revelation" is not to be found exclusively in the records of any one nation, "but is coextensive with the history of human development." A phrase about the "inexorable law of consequences"



shows that she was still a disciple of Bray, who praises her for illustrating that "law" in her novels. She seems, too, to have accepted the phrenology of Combe and Bray, as is shown by occasional references to the "anterior lobes" of such great men as Dickens and Professor Owen, whom she was presently to see. Chapman finally bought the *Westminster*, and arranged that George Eliot should become assistant-editor. She took up her duties in September 1851, and boarded with the Chapmans at their house in the Strand. Her wide knowledge of foreign and English literature, her industry and willingness to perform any kind of drudgery, were admirable qualifications for the post. It might be doubted whether a young lady who had hitherto lived only in the provinces, and had had no concern in periodical literature, would possess an instinct for the qualities which secure popular success. That, however, would be mainly a question for the Editor-in-chief, and the *Westminster* endeavoured to make its way by enlisting contributors already distinguished or soon to win distinction. The list of persons who were more or less interested in the undertaking is remarkable, and in one way or other George Eliot saw something of most of the writers who have left their mark upon the time. Some of the lights have faded. She is introduced to the daughter of the *Religion of the Universe*, and perhaps few readers will be able to say offhand that the phrase means the religion of Mr. Robert Fellowes. But in many cases we regret that her letters, written hastily in the intervals of continuous labour, give us only tantalising glimpses. The philosophical radicals had ceased to be efficient contributors. J. S. Mill, whose

position had been established by the *Logic* and the *Political Economy*, was at this time much of a recluse. He was, however, "propitiated" by Grote, who was "very friendly," and he contributed one article (upon Whewell's *Moral Philosophy*) of which the sub-editor did not think highly. Mill's early friend, William Ellis, of whose "apostolical labour" in trying to get *Political Economy* taught in primary schools he spoke enthusiastically, was personally kind, but does not appear to have contributed. Carlyle, who had just published *The Life of Sterling*, and beginning to plunge into *Frederick*, was invited to denounce the peerage. "Insinuating letters," offering "three other most glorious subjects," failed to bring him down, but he called and strongly, though fruitlessly, recommended "Browning the poet." With Froude, then just becoming a disciple of the prophet, she was more fortunate. She had greatly admired the *Nemesis of Faith*, and written a notice of it for the *Coventry Herald*. A personal acquaintance had followed; and but for his marriage at the time, Froude would have joined the Brays in their trip with her to Geneva. He now contributed a striking article upon the Book of Job, and afterwards wrote upon Spinoza. The number in which the "Job" appeared included contributions from Theodore Parker and Harriet Martineau. Miss Martineau attracted her by kindness and cordiality, and was an effective contributor. To James Martineau there are admiring references, though he generally wrote in other organs. Francis Newman, whom she had already called "our blessed St. Francis"; W. R. Greg, whose *Creed of Christendom* had produced a marked effect; W. J. Fox, the veteran radical

author and orator; and W. E. Forster, who wrote an article greatly approved by her upon American Slavery, are other names incidentally mentioned. Mazzini wrote an article, pronounced by Greg to be "sad stuff." The most important contributor, however, appears to have been Mr. Herbert Spencer. His article upon the "Universal Postulate" made a special impression. He had just brought out his *Social Statics*, pronounced, as she had heard, by G. H. Lewes to be the "best book on the subject." They rapidly became friends, and she declares him to be "a good, delightful creature." She "always feels better for being with him." By Mr. Herbert Spencer she was introduced towards the end of 1851 to George Henry Lewes, of whom more must be said directly.

Meanwhile it may be remarked that she was thus becoming more or less familiar with nearly all the eminent writers who, in one sense or other, were on the side of intellectual advance. They differed widely enough from each other, and there could hardly be a more fundamental contrast than that between Carlyle and Mr. Herbert Spencer. It was as well that she should learn that the Brays and Hennells, however excellent in their way, did not represent the only line of thought. She had, indeed, read too widely to be kept within the prison house of a single sect. One point may be noticed in passing, as it had a marked influence upon her later views. The philosophy of Comte was at this time attracting notice in England. Mill had been for a time a warm personal disciple, and had spoken of him with great respect in the *Logic*; Miss Martineau was compiling an abridgment of his work; and G. H. Lewes had written as an adherent of his

doctrine. George Eliot was interested; and in later life drew nearer to the Positivist than to any other school. Her editorial work seems to have been absorbing and often dispiriting. It was too much like flogging a dead horse. The public declined to care for the admirable articles addressed to them, and showed no very keen hankering for sound philosophy. She had to plod through much ponderous manuscript on arid topics. Her hands, she complains, are "hot and tremulous," while there is a "great dreary article" by her side asking for reading and abridgment. One day she has to read a review article upon taxation, to collate it with newspaper articles, and consider all that J. S. Mill says on the subject. Then Mr. Chapman produces a thick German volume, of which she is to read enough to form an opinion. Mr. Lewes calls, and "of course sits talking till the second bell rings," and at 11 P.M. she is still puzzling over taxation. Letters and callers and meetings of Associations distract her, and she is glad to fly for occasional relief to her friends at Coventry. In addition to her regular work she is translating Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, which appeared as by "Marian Evans" (the only time her real name was used) in July 1854. Feuerbach had developed Hegelianism into naturalism, and the translation apparently implies an extension of George Eliot's anti-theological tendencies. Another book by her on the *Idea of a Future Life* was advertised, but never appeared. She complains of headaches and rheumatism; and one is not surprised that by the end of 1853 she is becoming tired of it, and is giving notice of resignation to Mr. Chapman. She was living alone in lodgings, snatching brief holidays to be spent with



the Brays, and, we may guess, feeling the want of the domestic circle, which, even when not intellectually sympathetic, had satisfied her craving for affection.

George Henry Lewes, born in 1817, if not the profoundest reasoner, was certainly one of the most brilliant of the literary celebrities of the time. He was the grandson of a second-rate actor, and had had a very desultory education. The dates and facts seem to be rather confused. He had, it is said, passed through several schools, had then been a clerk in a merchant's office, and for some time a medical student; he had spent some years in France and Germany, and almost forgotten the use of his mother tongue. On returning to England he had for a time gone upon the stage; at the age of twenty he had given lectures upon philosophy at the chapel of W. J. Fox; and he had finally settled down to write books and articles on the most various topics. He had written a play and a couple of novels, one of which, *Rose, Blanche, and Violet*, made something of a mark. He had written articles upon French and German philosophy and literature; discoursed upon the Greek, Spanish, and Italian drama; and criticised Browning, Tennyson, and Macaulay. His *Biographical History of Philosophy*, which appeared in 1845 and 1846, showed that in spite of all distracting interests he thought himself qualified to expound ultimate truths. Learned professors who, like Sir William Hamilton, had spent lives upon abstruse metaphysical treatises, might despise the audacity of the young man who entered the arena with so slender an apparatus of learning. The brightness and vivacity of the book, however, and the happy introduction of the biographical element, roused the interest.

of ordinary readers, and perhaps persuaded some of them that much of the mystery in which the more ponderous philosophers wrapped themselves could be dispelled by a little common sense. The preface, indeed, announced that "philosophy" had had its day, and was to be superseded by Comte's Positivism. Lewes afterwards wrote the *Life of Goethe*, which though ardent Goethe worshippers may pronounce it to show a want of sympathy for some aspects of the hero, is singularly interesting and well written, and deserved the success which has made it a standard work in biography. He afterwards took to physiology, and after producing some popular books, approved, it is said, by "scientific bigwigs," proceeded to show the philosophical bearing of his studies in his *Problems of Life and Mind*. This was left as a fragment at his death. I need only say here that whatever their value, his later writings show the old alertness and keenness of intellect and his continued interest in the philosophical disquisitions to which, spite of all distractions, he was constantly recurring.

At this time Lewes was literary editor of the *Leader*, a weekly paper representing the same tendencies as the *Westminster*. He was publishing a series of articles upon Comte, to whom he had been personally introduced by J. S. Mill. He was what is generally called a Bohemian, though always with a serious ambition. He could converse ably upon all such matters as interested literary and journalistic circles in London, and his wide knowledge of continental writers gave him an authority in some matters not shared by many English contemporaries. He was a brilliant talker, fully able to turn his knowledge to

account. His conversation abounded in lively anecdotes, told with infinite zest; he was thoroughly genial, and ready at good-humoured repartee; and he was not hampered by any excessive reverence for conventional proprieties. He was of slight figure, and, according to Douglas Jerrold, the "ugliest man in London." It would be presumptuous to express any opinion upon the justice of so sweeping an observation. But if not beautiful, he was a man to forget, and to induce companions to forget, any such defects. He had bright eyes and a fine brow, and the whole face and bearing was full of intelligence. A social gathering must have consisted of very ponderous interests if it could not be stirred into animation by a man with so much more quicksilver in his composition than falls to the lot of the average Briton. Nobody, one might guess, was more likely to dazzle the grave young lady, profoundly interested in philosophy, and anxious to get the newest lights in speculation, than this daring and brilliant writer, who knew all that was being done in France and Germany, and could talk with equal confidence upon Comte and Hegel, or upon the last new play or oratorio in London. She was apparently rather repelled by his levity at first; but after a time says that he has "quite won her liking in spite of herself." He has had a good deal of her "vituperation"; but, "like a few other people in the world, he is much better than he seems—a man of heart and conscience, wearing a mask of flippancy."

Lewes had married in 1840; and for some time later lived in the same house with Thornton Hunt, who had edited the *Leader* in co-operation with him. Mrs. Lewes had already borne children to her husband.

Circumstances arose which, though Lewes's view of the marriage tie were anything but strict, had led some two years previously to a break-up of the family. A legal divorce was impossible; but George Eliot held that the circumstances justified her in forming a union with Lewes, which she considered as equivalent to a legitimate marriage. I have not, and I suppose that no one now has, the knowledge which would be necessary for giving an opinion as to the proper distribution of praise and blame among the various parties concerned, nor shall I argue the ethical question raised by George Eliot's conduct. It may be a pretty problem for casuists whether the breach of an assumed moral law is aggravated or extenuated by the offender's honest conviction that the law is not moral at all. George Eliot at any rate emphatically took that position. She had long protested against the absolute indissolubility of marriage. She thought, we are told, that the system worked badly, because wives were less anxious to please their husbands when their position was "invulnerable." She held, with Milton, that so close a tie between persons not united in soul was intolerable. "All self-sacrifice is good," she had said upon reading *Jane Eyre* in 1848, "but one would like it to be in a somewhat nobler cause than that of a diabolical law which chains a man body and soul to a putrefying carcase." Mrs. Lewes was not so bad as Mrs. Rochester, but the hardship was sufficient to justify an exception to the ordinary rule. Writing a few months after the union, she says that she cannot understand how any unworldly unsuperstitious person, who is sufficiently "acquainted with the realities of life," can pronounce



her relation to Lewes "immoral." Nothing in her life, she declares, has been more "profoundly serious," which means, it seems, that she does not approve "light and easily broken ties." In her writings, indeed, her tendency is to insist upon the sanctity of the traditional bonds, which, whatever their origin, are essential to social welfare, and so far she agrees on this, as on many points, with her friends the Positivists. Comte, though he admired the Catholic doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage, discovered the necessity for making an exception which happened to cover his own case. George Eliot, it seems, who had never accepted the strictest doctrine, was more consistent. No one can deny that the relation to Lewes was "serious" enough in her sense. It lasted through their common lives, and their devotion to each other was unlimited, and appears only to have strengthened with time. She never misses an opportunity of expressing her affection for her "husband," or her gratitude for the blessings due to his devotion. Lewes expressed his feeling with equal emphasis. In a journal of 1859 he speaks of a walk with Mr. Herbert Spencer. Mr. Spencer's friendship had been the brightest ray in a very dreary "wasted period of my life"; it had roused him from indifference to fresh intellectual interest; but, he adds, "I owe Spencer another and a deeper debt. It was through him that I learned to know Marian—to know her was to love her—and since then my life has been a new birth. To her I owe all my prosperity and all my happiness. God bless her!" Lewes, like other men of his buoyant temperament, was well enough satisfied with himself; but his vanity was made inoffensive by

his generosity. He recognised all talent gladly; and the recognition in the case of George Eliot rose to enthusiastic devotion. He looked up to her as in her own field an entirely superior being, in the front rank of contemporary genius. Their house became a temple of a domestic worship, in which he was content to be the high priest of the presiding deity. He stood as much as possible between her and all the worries of the outside world. He transacted her business, wrote her letters, kept her from the knowledge of unpleasant criticism, read all her books with her as they were composed, made suggestions and occasional criticisms; but, above all, encouraged her by hearty and sincere praise during the fits of depression to which she was constitutionally liable. She gave him the manuscripts of her books with inscriptions recording her gratitude, and the inscription in *Romola* may sum up her permanent sentiment: "To the Husband, whose perfect love has been the best source of her insight and strength, this manuscript is given by his devoted wife, the writer."

Thö Leweses left England together in July 1854 and went to Weimar, where he worked upon the *Life of Goethe*. In November they went to Berlin, and returned to England in March 1855. They saw a good many distinguished Germans, only one of whom "seemed conscious of his countrymen's deficiencies." They were, however, kindly received, and George Eliot's intellectual horizon was no doubt widened by intercourse with Rauch the sculptor, Liszt the musician, Liebig the chemist, Varnhagen von Ense, and others well known in various departments. She worked at a translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, which was

never published, though much of it seems to have been completed. On reaching England they settled for a time at Richmond, and had to take seriously to writing. Lewes had to support his wife's children, and both had to depend upon their pens. Lewes was bringing out his *Life of Goethe*. George Eliot continued her labours upon Spinoza, and contributed articles to the *Westminster* and other periodicals. She wrote upon Heine, Young of the *Night Thoughts*, Margaret Fuller, and Mary Wollstonecraft, and upon Dr. Cumming, who in those days was interpreting the Apocalypse and thrilling simple readers by a prospect of the approaching battle of Armageddon. Her remarks upon Cumming—rather small game, it must be admitted, for such an adversary—had one result. They convinced Lewes that she possessed not only great talent, but true genius. In 1856 the Leweses made some stay at Ilfracombe and Tenby, where Lewes was seeking materials for his *Seaside Studies*. Upon their return to Richmond in September, George Eliot at last took up the work by which she was to become famous.

## CHAPTER IV.

### SCENES OF CHERICAL LIFE.

HITHERTO George Eliot, who was now thirty-six, had confined herself to comparatively humble work. She was at home in the upper sphere of philosophy and the historical criticism of religion; but she was content to be an expositor of the views of independent thinkers. She had spent years of toil upon translating Strauss, Feuerbach, and Spinoza; and was fully competent to be in intellectual communion with her friends Charles Bray and Mr. Herbert Spencer. It does not appear, however, that she ever aspired to make original contributions to speculative thought. The effect of her philosophical studies upon her imaginative work was very marked; but she was not to be the first example of a female metaphysician of high rank. She was only to be the first female novelist whose inspiration came in a great degree from a philosophical creed. I have already spoken of the apparently slow development of the purely artistic impulse. Most women at the present day begin, I believe, to write novels in their teens. Miss Burney made herself famous at the age of twenty-five by *Evelina*, written some years previously. Miss Brontë had already finished her brilliant career before George Eliot had begun to write. The most famous of her predecessors, Miss



Austen, had written stories in her childhood, though her first novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, did not appear till she was thirty-five. Miss Edgeworth published her first novel, *Castle Rackrent*, at the age of thirty-three; and Miss Ferrier her *Marriage* at the age of thirty-five. Mrs. Gaskell's (George Eliot's senior by ten years) first novel, *Mary Barton*, appeared when the author was thirty-eight. These precedents may perhaps suggest that women who have the gift have been often kept back by the feminine virtue of diffidence. Of that virtue, if it be a virtue, George Eliot undoubtedly possessed a large share, and the circumstances of her youth fostered the tendency. Her reverence for her intellectual guides, who were not much given to novel-reading and writing, would act in the same direction. Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophy may be admirable in its own sphere, but is not of itself likely to stimulate an interest in purely imaginative work. It almost seems as if George Eliot would never have written a novel at all had it not been for the quick perception of Lewes. In their circumstances, too, there were sound utilitarian reasons for trying an experiment in the direction of the most profitable variety of literature.

George Eliot indeed had always cherished a "vague dream" that some time or other she might write a novel. She had as yet got no further than an "introductory chapter" descriptive of life in a Staffordshire village and the neighbouring farmhouses. The dream had died away. She became despondent of success in that, as in other undertakings. She thought that, though she could describe, she had no dramatic or constructive power. She happened, however, to have

the old fragment with her in Germany, and read it to Lewes one evening at Berlin. He shared her doubts as to the dramatic power; but the ability shown in her other articles led him to think the experiment of novel-writing worth trying. One day, in a dreamy mood, she fancied herself writing a story to be called "The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton." Lewes was struck by the title, and encouraged her to make a start. "You have wit, description, and philosophy," he would say; "those go a good way towards the production of a novel." On 22nd September she at last began to write. She showed the first part to Lewes, suggesting that it might open a series of sketches drawn from her observations of the clergy. The scene at Cross Farm convinced him that she could write good dialogue. It was still to be seen whether she had a command of pathos. This was settled by a chapter describing the last illness of Mrs. Barton. They both "cried over it," and Lewes kissed her, saying, "I think your pathos is better than your fun." Thus encouraged, she finished the story on the 5th of November, and next day Lewes sent the ms. with a note to John Blackwood. Lewes stated that the story, intended for the first of a series, had been written by a friend whose powers he had doubted. The doubts had been changed by the reading into "very high admiration." "Such humour, pathos, vivid presentation, and nice observation," he thought, "had not been exhibited in this style since the *Vicar of Wakefield*." Blackwood answered, saying that the story "would do," though making some criticisms, and adding that till he had seen more of the proposed series he could not make "any decided proposition for

the publication of the Tales" in the *Magazine*. The rather guarded approval called forth a stronger eulogy from Lewes, declaring that the story showed the rarest of all faculties—"dramatic ventriloquism." A publisher can hardly be expected to praise too enthusiastically the wares for which he is bargaining. As Blackwood put it undeniably, "criticism would assume a much soberer tone were critics compelled seriously to act whenever they expressed an opinion." He showed his genuine opinion by accepting the story at once, and waiving his objection to taking it without seeing its successors. The confidence of Lewes's friend, which had been shaken, was greatly restored by this letter. "He" was afraid, said Lewes, of failure, and "by failure would understand that which I suspect most writers would be apt to consider as success—so high is his ambition. I tell you this," added Lewes, "that you may understand the sort of shy, shrinking, ambitious nature you have to deal with." The first part of the story accordingly appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in January 1857; and Blackwood sent fifty guineas and some very cordial praises in return. "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" and "Janet's Repentance" appeared in the *Magazine* in the following months; and these appeared together as *Scenes of Clerical Life* at the beginning of 1858. The name "George Eliot," under which these and all her later works appeared, was assumed, it appears, because Lewes's name was George, and "Eliot" was "a good mouth-filling, easily pronounced word." She had intended to continue the series; but Blackwood's "want of sympathy with the first part" of "Janet's Repentance" had annoyed her, though he came round to admiration of the third

part. She wound up the book, therefore, and in October began a more elaborate work.

The *Scenes of Clerical Life* soon attracted notice, though the quiet tone was hardly calculated to produce an instantaneous success of the startling kind. Copies of the collective edition were sent to Froude, Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson, Ruskin, Faraday, Helps, Albert Smith, and Mrs. Carlyle. Mrs. Carlyle wrote warmly, and declared in Carlylean phrase that "it was a *human* book, written out of the heart of a man, not merely out of the brain of an author, full of tenderness and pathos, without a scrap of sentimentality, of sense without dogmatism, of earnestness without twaddle—a book that makes one *feel friends* at once and for always with the man or woman who wrote it." Carlyle, she added, had promised for once to break his rule of never reading novels when he should emerge from *Frederick*. Froude was also cordial, but the most enthusiastic praise came from Dickens. He had never, he declared, seen the like of the "exquisite truth and delicacy both of the humour and pathos of these stories." Upon another point Dickens showed a keener insight than other writers. In spite of the assumed name, he thought that the author must be a woman. If not, "no man ever before had the art of making himself so like a woman since the world began." Mrs. Carlyle suggested a more complex hypothesis, such as is often put forward in the regions of the "higher criticism." The author might be first cousin to a clergyman, with a wife from whom he had got the "beautiful feminine touches." Thackeray, it was reported, though he "spoke highly" of the book, thought that the author was a man,



which, if true, gives a superfluous proof that even the finest critics are fallible. Meanwhile, it seems that certain touches in the book had convinced George Eliot's old neighbours that the author came from their district. The Scenes, as she admitted soon afterwards, contained "portraits," a mistake which should not occur again, and was due to the fact that her "hand was not well in." The plots, too, were more or less reproductions of remembered incidents. Milly Barton, we are told, is the wife of a Mr. Gwyther, curate of Chilvers-Coton. He died when George Eliot was sixteen, and was a friend of Mrs. Robert Evans, who appears in the story as Mrs. Hacket. A persecution of a clergyman, like that upon which *Janet's Repentance* turns, really took place, though she filled in details from imagination. *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story* was a more interesting application of the same method. Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel represent Sir Roger and Lady Newdigate. The Newdigates had taken charge of a girl called Sally Shilton, daughter of a collier on the property, who had given promise of musical talent. They had her trained as a singer; and when ill-health forced her to give up the attempt, they continued their protection. She married a Mr. Ebdell, vicar of Chilvers-Coton (the "Shepperton" of the story), in 1801, and died twenty-two years later. Sir Roger's heir, Charles Parker, died suddenly, when Sally was a little over twenty, in 1795. George Eliot, who must have learned the facts from family tradition, converted Sally Shilton into Caterina Sarti, by way of explaining her musical talent as a case of "heredity," and then invented the love affair with Captain Wybrow, who takes the place of Charles Parker.

Thus a very touching and consistent love story is based upon a true history, though Charles Parker in his new character has to be guilty of a thoughtless flirtation in which he never indulged, and Sally Shilton is sentenced to a shorter life than she really enjoyed. The representatives of the Newdigate family seem to have regarded this adaptation of their family history as rather impertinent; and though Sir Christopher is admitted to be an admirable portrait of Sir Roger, we are assured that other persons concerned were better than their representatives. As George Eliot must have learned the story from common talk, and given a more distinct colouring to it from her familiarity with Arbury House and the family portraits, and then modified the characters so as to make them work out the story effectively, the deviation from literal truth will not scandalise those who have not the honour to be Newdigates. To them the interest lies in the skill with which these childish recollections have been converted into one of the most charming of stories. The critic of this first book might perhaps be content with saying ditto to Lewes, Mrs. Carlyle, and Dickens. At most he might be inclined to make a few deductions from the superlatives which are natural, or, one would rather say, commendable in an enthusiastic recognition of a new writer of genius. Some defects perhaps show that the writer had not yet acquired a full command of her art. In writing to Blackwood, she says that her "scientific illustrations [in *Amos Barton*] must be a fault, since they seem to have obtruded themselves disagreeably on one of my readers." She declares her innocence of any but a superficial knowledge of science. The one reader showed some acuteness, for the

scientific allusions are not yet so prominent as they came to be in her later style. In the society of Lewes and his friends a scientific allusion, which might alarm the average reader of a magazine, would no doubt pass for commonplace. George Eliot's environment was always so scientific and philosophical that it would have been difficult to be quite free from the taint. The weakness does not imply affectation, and should be taken as an implied, if undeserved, compliment to the reader's intelligence. Blackwood seems to have been vexed by a different indication of defective skill in this story. He did not like the "wind up," and thought that there was "too minute a specification" of the children who gather round Milly Barton's deathbed, and of other persons not previously introduced. I confess that, as the story now stands, I see no force in this criticism; but it may, I think, be said that it marks a slight awkwardness. George Eliot, it would seem, wanted to draw a portrait of the rustic society, and she wanders a little from the main situation in search of characteristic touches. The description of the clerical dinner party seems to be dragged in merely for the purpose of describing different types of clergymen; and here, and in the rather irrelevant Mr. Farquhar, we probably have some of the undesirable portraits from life. If this be true, and I only pretend to speak for myself, the weakness entirely disappears in *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*. That appears to be almost faultless, and as admirable a specimen of the literary genus to which it belongs as was ever written. *Janet's Repentance* is to me less pleasing for a different reason. The coarse attorney, Dempster, to whom Janet is made a victim, is undoubtedly drawn with

great vigour, and is perhaps one of the characters which convinced readers that his creator must be of his own sex. Lady novelists are not generally familiar with such blackguards. Janet, however, is so charming as to make her subjection to the snuffy, brandy-smelling, wife-beating bully a little too repulsive; and, moreover, I fancy that a really sharp lawyer would have found some less clumsy methods of insulting the evangelical clergyman. With all her keenness of observation, George Eliot seems to be getting a little beyond her tether when she enters the bar of the "Red Lion."

It is, however, needless to insist upon trifling shortcomings, except as they may indicate limitations to be displayed hereafter. The stories have a very definite, and, in spite of certain prejudices suggested by the word, a very legitimate moral. Amos Barton, she admits, is an extremely commonplace person—so commonplace, indeed, as Blackwood put it, that the "asinine stupidity of his conduct about the Countess" disposes one "to kick him." Commonplace people, she observes, have consciences and "sublime promptings to do the painful right"; they have their unspoken sorrows and their sacred joys; their hearts have perhaps "gone out towards their firstborn, and they have mourned over the irreclaimable dead. . . . Depend upon it, you would gain unspeakably if you would learn with me to see some of the poetry and the pathos, the tragedy and comedy, lying in the experience of a human soul that looks out through dull grey eyes and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones." In a letter written after her next book, she gives her theory: "If art does not enlarge men's



sympathies, it does nothing morally. . . . The only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings is that those who read them should be better able to *imagine* and to *feel* the pains and the joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being struggling, erring human creatures." This is apparently meant to meet some remonstrance against her recognition of good qualities in characters regarded by her freethinking friends as embodiments of superstitious bigotry. The desire to rouse sympathy for figures who at first sight repel the more cultivated and intelligent is the motive of these stories. Amos Barton, who represents sheer crass stupidity, and Mr. Gilfil, who, to outward appearance, is the old high-and-dry parson, respected by his "bucolic parishioners" for his general shrewdness and special knowledge of shorthorns, and by the squires for his youthful performances in the hunting field, and Mr. Tryan, to whom the evangelicism of Wilberforce and Newton represents the most exalted form of religion, have all had their romances, indicative of true and tender natures beneath the superficial crust of old-fashioned oddities. It is the especial function of the genuine humorist to make such revelations. Sir Roger de Coverley and Parson Adams and Uncle Toby and Dominie Sampson and Colonel Newcome have this much in common that the lovable in them is brought into relief by the superficial oddities; and George Eliot is only following with more consciousness the path which had been indicated by many predecessors of genius. One of whom she always spoke with marked affection was Goldsmith. I remember (it is one of my few reminiscences) to have heard her

speaking with enthusiasm of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, and, if my memory be correct, contrasting it with *Paul et Virginie*, much to the advantage of the British author. The vicar, she held, represented the most wholesome vein in the sentimentalism of the period. I dislike attempts to class literary masterpieces "in order of merit," and I need not here ask what are the qualities to which Goldsmith's inimitable work owes its lasting charm. I think in any case that there is something characteristic in George Eliot's admiration of a book in which the pathos is made effective by a combination of the tenderest feeling with the most exquisite literary tact; and in which we can indulge "great dispositions to cry" without the sense that the crying would have an absurd side. The vicar, however, differs from George Eliot's clergy in this respect (as in many others) that he lives in an idyllic world. Wakefield has, I believe, been identified with some actual locality; but I fancy that it is really in some Arcadia, not to be approached by any boat or railway; and Shepperton, on the contrary, is clearly Chilvers-Coton in Warwickshire, and the inhabitants were but modifications of real people. Miss Mitford's *Village*, which made her reputation in the year of George Eliot's birth, is a description of Three Mile Cross in Berkshire; and Mrs. Gaskell's *Cranford*, which was contributed in 1851 to Dickens's *Household Words*, describes the little town of Knutsford. Both of them are very charming in widely different ways; and in them, as, of course, in Miss Austen, George Eliot had precedents for her choice of a subject. What is characteristic is the tone of feeling and the power of the execution. Dickens's appreciation is the more

creditable to him because the work is conspicuous by its freedom from his besetting faults. The humour is perfectly unforced, and shows the comic side of prosaic commonplace without a touch of grotesque extravagance, and the pathos is made to tell by scrupulous self-restraint. Milly Barton dies in the presence of her husband and children, and we are never crossed by the thought which disturbs so many deathbeds in fiction, that she is somehow conscious of an audience applauding her excellence in the part. The situations are simple, and the effect is produced by what we can recognise as the natural development of the characters involved. And this is the indication of a profoundly reflective intellect, which contemplates the little dramas performed by commonplace people as parts of the wider tragi-comedy of human life; and the village communities, their thoughts and customs, as subordinate elements in the great "social organism." The reflections suggested by Caterina's troubles may illustrate the remark: "When this poor little heart was being bruised with a weight too heavy for it, Nature was holding on her calm inexorable way, in unmoved and terrible beauty. The stars were rushing in their eternal courses; the tides swelled to the level of the last expectant weed; the sun was making brilliant day to the busy nations on the other side of the swift earth. The stream of human thought was hurrying and broadening onward. The astronomer was at his telescope; the great ships were labouring over the waves; the toiling eagerness of commerce, the fierce spirit of revolution, were only ebbing in brief rest; and sleepless statesmen were dreading the possible crisis of the morrow. What were our little

Tina and her trouble in this mighty torrent, rushing from one awful unknown to another? Lighter than the smallest centre of quivering life in the water-drop, hidden and uncared for as the pulse of anguish in the breast of the tiniest bird that has fluttered down to its nest with the long-sought food, and has found the nest empty and torn."

This may recall the famous passage in Carlyle's *French Revolution*, speaking of the fall of the Bastille. It may be that a too frequent and explicit suggestion of such reflections would become tiresome. That criticism cannot, I think, be applied to anything in the *Scenes of Clerical Life*. It is the constant, though not obtrusive, suggestion of the depths below the surface of trivial life which gives an impressive dignity to the work; and, in any case, marks one most distinctive characteristic of George Eliot's genius.



## CHAPTER V.

ADAM BEDE.

THE diffidence from which George Eliot suffered happily took the form of prompting to conscientious workmanship. As Lewes said, she was "ambitious" as well as "shy." That she aimed at so high a mark showed a consciousness of great powers, but not an equal confidence that they could be brought to bear upon the task. A genuine success could only be reached by a strenuous application on a well-considered scheme. The little discouragement of Blackwood's inadequate appreciation of *Janet's Repentance* only induced her to take a larger canvas, which would give room for a fuller manifestation of her genius. She finished *Janet's Repentance* on 9th October 1857, and began *Adam Bede* on 22nd October. She completed the first volume by the following March; wrote the second during a following tour in Germany; and after returning to England at the beginning of September, completed the third volume on 16th November. It was published in the beginning of 1858. When recording these dates in her journal she gives also an interesting account of the genesis of the book. It was suggested by an anecdote which she had heard from an aunt, the Methodist preacher, Mrs. Samuel Evans. Mrs. Evans, she says, was a

"very small, black-eyed woman, who in the days of her strength could not rest without exhorting and remonstrating in season and out of season." She had become much gentler when, at the age of about sixty, she visited Griff and made the acquaintance of her niece. She was very "loving and kind"; and the niece, then under twenty, given to strict reticence about her "inward life," was encouraged to confide in her aunt. This, as already quoted, shows the affectionate relationship which sprang up. They only met twice afterwards, and Mrs. Evans died in 1849. The anecdote which Mrs. Evans had told was of a girl who was hanged for child-murder. Mrs. Evans had passed a night in prayer with her and induced her to make a confession. She afterwards accompanied the criminal in the cart to the place of execution. George Eliot had been deeply affected by this account, and while writing her first story spoke of it to Lewes. He observed, with his keen eye to business, that the prison scene would make an effective incident in a story. The novel was accordingly worked out with a view to this climax. Mrs. Evans was transformed into Dinah Morris, though materially altered in the process. The child-murder implies the seducer, Arthur Donnithorne, and the true lover, Adam Bede. For Adam Bede, she took her father as in some degree the model, though again carefully avoiding direct portraiture. These points established, the general situation is defined, and the development follows simply and naturally. Lewes was responsible for two important points. He was convinced by the first three chapters that Dinah Morris would be the centre of interest for readers. She had there been introduced as preaching

and receiving an offer of marriage from Seth Bede. He inferred that she should be the "principal figure at the last"; and the remainder of the story was written with this end "constantly in view." Lewes's other remark was that Adam Bede was becoming too passive. He ought to be brought into more direct collision with Arthur Donnithorne. George Eliot was impressed by this suggestion; and one night, while listening to "William Tell" at the Munich Opera, the fight between the two lovers came upon her as a "necessity." An account of the way in which a work of genius has been created is always interesting; and in this case, I think that it helps to explain some important characteristics of the story.

*Adam Bede*, whatever else may be said of it, placed the author in the first rank of the "Victorian" novelists. Some of us can still look back with fondness to the middle of the last century, and recall the period which seems—to our old-fashioned tastes at least—to have been a flowering time of genius. Within a few years on either side of 1850 many great lights of literature arose or culminated. By *David Copperfield*, which appeared in 1850, Dickens' popular empire, one may say, was finally established; and if his best work was done, his admirers steadily increased in number. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, *Esmond*, and *The Newcomes* came out between 1847 and 1855. Miss Brontë's short and most brilliant apparition lasted from 1847 to 1853. The versatile Bulwer was opening a new and popular vein by *The Caxtons* and *My Novel* in 1850 and 1853, preaching sound domestic morality and omitting the True and the Beautiful. All Charles Kingsley's really powerful works of fiction—

*Alton Locke*, *Yeast*, *Hypatia*, and *Westward Ho!*—appeared between 1850 and 1855. Mrs. Gaskell had first made a mark by *Mary Barton* in 1848, which was followed by *Cranford* and *North and South*, the last in 1855. Trollope, after some failures, was beginning to set forth the humours of Barsetshire by the *Warden* in 1855; and Charles Reade became a popular novelist by *Christie Johnstone* in 1853, and *Never too late to Mend* in 1856. In 1855, I may add, Mr. George Meredith's *Shaving of Shagpat* was praised and reviewed by George Eliot; but the author had long to wait for a general recognition of his genius. Anyhow, an ample and attractive feast was provided for those who had the good fortune to be at the novel-reading age in the fifties. The future historian of literature may settle to his own satisfaction what was the permanent value of the different stars in this constellation, and what was the relation which George Eliot was to bear to her competitors. He will no doubt analyse the spirit of the age and explain how the novelists, more or less unconsciously, reflected the dominant ideas which were agitating the social organism. I am content to say that a retrospect, coloured perhaps by some personal illusion, seems to suggest a very comfortable state of things. People, we are told, were absurdly optimistic in those days; they had not learned that the universe was out of joint, and were too respectable to look into the dark and nasty sides of human life. The generation which had been in its ardent youth during the Reform of 1832 believed in progress and expected the millennium rather too confidently. It liked plain common-sense. Scott's romanticism and Byron's sentimentalism represented obsolete phases of feeling,



and suggested only burlesque or ridicule. The novelists were occupied in constructing a most elaborate panorama of the manners and customs of their own times with a minuteness and psychological analysis not known to their predecessors. Their work is, of course, an implicit "criticism of life." Thackeray's special bugbear, snobbism, represents the effete aristocratic prejudices out of which the world was slowly struggling. Dickens applied fiction to assail the abuses, which were a legacy from the old order—  
10 debtors' prisons, and workhouses, and Yorkshire schools, and the "circumlocution office." The "social question" was being treated by Kingsley and Mrs. Gaskell. But little was said which had any direct bearing upon  
15 those religious or philosophical problems in which George Eliot was especially interested. The novelists when they approach such topics speak with sincere respect of religious belief, though they obviously hold also that true Christianity is something very different  
20 from the creeds which are nominally accepted by the churches. They regard such matters as generally outside of their sphere, and simply accept the view of the sensible layman with a prejudice against bigotry and priestcraft. Here was one special province  
25 for the new writer. George Eliot alone came to fiction from philosophy. She was, as we have sufficiently seen, familiar with the speculations of her day, and had accepted the most advanced rationalist  
30 opinions. But, on the other hand, she had a strong religious sentiment which asserted itself the more as she abandoned the dogmatic system. She puts this emphatically in her letters at the time. She had, as she tells M. D'Albert in 1859, abandoned the old spirit

of "antagonism" which had possessed her ten years before. She now sympathises with "any faith in which human sorrow and human longing for purity have expressed themselves." She thinks, too, that Christianity is the highest expression of the religious sentiment that has yet found its place in the history of mankind, and has the "profoundest interest in the inward life of sincere Christians in all ages." She has ceased, she says a little later, to have any sympathy with freethinkers as a class, and holds that a "spiritual blight comes with no faith." It is characteristic that Buckle, who was startling the world at this time, inspires her with "personal dislike," as "an irreligious conceited man." It is therefore intelligible that she should take a Methodist preacher for her centre of interest. Methodism, she says, in the opening of *Adam Bede*, was a "rudimentary culture" for the simple peasantry; it "linked their thoughts with the past," and "suffused their souls with the sense of a pitying, loving, infinite presence, sweet as summer to the houseless needy." Methodism, to some of her readers, may mean "low-pitched gables up dingy streets, sleek grocers, sponging preachers, and hypocritical jargon—elements which are regarded as an exhaustive analysis of Methodism in many fashionable quarters." Certainly that would be true of readers of Dickens. Stiggins and Chadband and their like were wonderful caricatures, but imply a very summary "analysis." The difference is significant. George Eliot had gone much further than Dickens in explicit rejection of the popular religion, considered as a system of doctrine; but she found her ideal heroine in one of its typical representatives.

If, therefore, we accept the author's view, *Adam Bede* is to derive its main interest from Dinah Morris. Her sermon at the opening is to strike the keynote; and we are to share the impression which it makes upon Seth Bede, that "she's too good and holy for any man, let alone me." This view of the book did not strike everybody. The *Saturday Review* contained a "laudatory" but "characteristic criticism." "Dinah," she exclaims, "is not mentioned!" It is "characteristic," no doubt, because in those days the *Saturday Review*, though it had a most brilliant staff of writers, was not distinguished by "enthusiasm," and would be least of all inclined to expend enthusiasm upon a Methodist preacher. There is, we know, a class of beings which has a natural antipathy to holy water. Perhaps it is due to some such weakness that I must confess to a certain sympathy with that unlucky reviewer. Undoubtedly, Dinah Morris is not only an elaborate, but a most skilful and loving portrait of a beautiful soul. Reading the book carefully, one must admit that she performs her part admirably. She shows unerring delicacy and nobility of feeling; and her sermons are expositions of that side of her creed which clearly ought to appeal to one's better nature. I fully admit, therefore, that I ought to accept Seth Bede's estimate, and to fall in love with this undeniable saint, if indeed my reverence ought not to be too strong to admit of love. My failure to do my duty in this respect may possibly be shared by some fellow-sinners. It is true, I think, though perhaps lamentable, that perfect characters in fiction have a tendency to be insipid. One wants some little touch of frailty to convince one that they

are really human. It was strange, said George Eliot, that people should fancy that she had "copied" Dinah Morris's sermons and prayers, when they were really "written with hot tears as they surged up in her own mind." They have no doubt the earnestness of genuine feeling. And yet to me that accounts for one characteristic without quite justifying it. Mrs. Samuel Evans had, one may assume, the defects incident to her position. She must have been provincial and ignorant, and the beautiful soul shone through an imperfect medium. George Eliot, in modifying or, as she thought, entirely changing the "individuality," has deprived her heroine of the colouring which would make her fully harmonise with her surroundings. She is a little too good not only for Seth but for this world, and I have a difficulty in obeying the summons to fall upon my knees and worship.

People of happier constitution must accept this as a confession. I only wish to explain why I feel myself to be rather at cross purposes with my author, and to admit that the criticism which I am about to make may, if not erroneous, be based upon partly insufficient reasons. That criticism is briefly that the development of the story does not quite follow the lines required by the reader's sympathies. The main situation naturally reminds one of Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*. Both novels turn upon an accusation of child-murder, and Jeanie and Effie Deans correspond roughly to Dinah Morris and Hetty Sorrel. To "compare" the two, except by admitting that they are both masterpieces in different styles, would be absurd: both in their strength and their weakness they are



obviously to be judged by different standards; and I only speak of Scott because his story suggests one significant difference. The interest of the *Heart of Midlothian* culminates in the trial scene where Jeanie Deans has to make the choice between telling the fatal truth or saving her sister by perjury. Scott treats it magnificently in his own way by broad masculine touches. One advantage is naturally offered by the facts from which he started. Jeanie Deans is exposed to a tremendous ordeal, which brings out most effectively her character, and involves a true tragical catastrophe. The scene in the prison, which, as George Eliot tells us, was to be the climax of *Adam Bede*, is curiously wanting in impressiveness of this nature. Poor helpless little Hester Sorrel has been convicted of murder, and expects to be hanged next day. Dinah Morris goes to her in order to persuade her to make a confession. From the point of view of the persons concerned that was no doubt a very desirable result. But it does not in the least matter to the story, as Hetty's guilt has been already conclusively proved. Neither is it a result which requires any great ability for its achievement. Hetty is anything but a criminal who would make a point of "dying game." She is a most pathetic figure, bewildered, deserted, and in immediate prospect of the gallows; and is quite unable to make any opposition to the woman who comes to her with the first message of love from outside her prison. To have failed to extract a confession from her would have shown a singular want of capacity in her spiritual guide. One would have expected that a humdrum gaol chaplain, or a rough revivalist with threats of

hell-fire, could equally have accomplished that end. Dinah Morris undoubtedly does her duty with admirable tact and tenderness, and shows herself to be—what we know her to be—a woman with a beautiful soul. The result, however, is that the real interest of the scene is with the pathetic criminal, and not with the admirable female confessor. The story of Hetty's wanderings in search of her seducer is told with inimitable force and pathos; and we are not surprised to learn that it was written continuously under the influence of strong feeling. Hetty moves us to the core. Dinah Morris, on the other hand, instead of forming the real centre of interest, is a most charming person, who looks in occasionally, and acts as an edifying and eloquent chorus to comment upon the behaviour of the people in whom we are really interested. The last book, therefore, comes upon us, if we take this view, as superfluous and rather unpleasant. Hetty is despatched to Botany Bay, and we are suddenly invited to be interested in a new love affair, when we discover that the saint is not above marrying, and that Adam Bede, who up to this time has been passionately in love with Hetty, can be sensible enough to discover the merits of her antithesis. The tragedy is put aside; all the unpleasant results are swept away as carefully as possible; and everything is made to end happily in the good old fashion.

I cannot, therefore, accept *Adam Bede* as centred upon this religious motive. On that assumption it ought to have been called *Dinah Morris*; and the other characters should have been interesting as transmitting or resisting the grace which inspires her. But there all hostile criticism may end. I

can be unfeignedly grateful to the beautiful Methodist for introducing me to a delightful circle, who were evoked from George Eliot's early memories. If they won't stay in the background, I am all the better pleased. Adam Bede himself is, one is forced to guess, a closer portrait of her father than she intended. We are told that an old friend of Robert Evans had the story read to him, and sat up for hours to listen to descriptions which he recognised, exclaiming at intervals: 'That's Robert, that's Robert to the life!' No doubt an ordinary reader exaggerates superficial resemblances, and is blind to more refined differences which seem all-important to the writer. That the father was one model is undisputed; and one remark is suggested by the portrait, namely, that in spite of her learning and her philosophy, George Eliot is always pre-eminently feminine. The *Scenes of Clerical Life* suggested, as we have seen, a dispute as to the sex of the author. Now that we know, we can, of course, see that others ought to have showed Dickens's penetration. There is always, I fancy, a difference which should be perceptible to acute critics. Men drawn by women, even by the ablest, are never quite of the masculine gender. They may, indeed, be admirable portraits, but still portraits drawn from outside. In each of the clerical stories, the official heroes are men—Amos Barton, Gilfil, and Tryan. But in each of them the women—Milly and Caterina and Janet—are drawn with a more intimate sympathy; and though a man might have been author of the heroes, no man, as we may safely say now, could have described the heroines. Adam Bede is a most admirable portrait; but we can, I think, see

clearly enough that he always corresponds to the view which an intelligent daughter takes of a respected father. That is, perhaps, the way in which one would like to have one's portrait taken; but one is sensible that the likeness though correct is not quite exhaustive. One characteristic point is the kind of resentment with which the true woman contemplates a man unduly attracted by female beauty. Adam Bede's passion for Hetty produces an exposition of the theory: "How pretty the little puss looks in that odd dress! It would be the easiest folly in the world to fall in love with her," with her "sweet baby-like roundness," "the delicate dark rings of hair," and the "great dark eyes with their long eyelashes." "What a prize the man gets who wins a sweet bride like Hetty!" "The dear, young, round, soft, flexible thing!" A man is conscious of being a great "physiognomist" under such circumstances, and thinks that "Nature has written out his bride's character for him in those exquisite lines of cheek and lip and chin, in those eyelids delicate as petals, in those long lashes curled like the stamen of a flower, in the dark liquid depths of those wonderful eyes!" That was the way in which Adam Bede reasoned, poor man! George Eliot knows better, and suspects "that there is no direct correlation between eyelashes and morals; or else, that the eyelashes express the disposition of the fair one's grandmother, which is on the whole less important to us." In fact, as she truly remarks, "it is generally the feminine eye that first detects the moral deficiencies hidden under the 'dear deceit' of beauty," and Mrs. Poyser is not to be hoodwinked. "She's no better than a peacock, as 'ud strut about on



the wall, and spread its tail when the sun shone if all the folks i' the parish was dying: there's nothing seems to give her a turn i' th' inside, not even when we thought Totty had tumbled into the pit." Mrs. Poyser, no doubt, is as right as usual, and the remark, indeed, had been made, like most others, by satirists of both sexes; but it is specially congenial to the feminine mind. Miss Brontë, for example, looks on with similar indignation at the dulness of man when "Dr. John" in *Villette* is attracted by the frivolous Ginevra Fanshawe. George Eliot had an eye for the "kitten-like" beauty of brainless young women, and her power over the male sex is described as a sort of natural perversity. "Every man who is not a monster, a mathematician, or a mad philosopher," she says in Amos Barton, "is the slave of some woman or other," and we must confess the undeniable truth. Strong men do fall in love with pretty fools. Perhaps we are not as much ashamed of it as we should be. Hetty is made so thoroughly charming in her way that we sympathise with Adam Bede's love for her, and are quite aware that many precedents might be adduced for him since the time of Samson. George Eliot thinks it necessary to apologise, by showing eloquently that feminine beauty may affect a strong man like music; and to remonstrate in rather superfluous irony with the sensible people who despise such weaknesses. No apology is necessary. Rather we see the point of Lewes's suggestion. We can perceive that the real danger was that Adam might be too "passive." His love for Hetty, we might fancy, is to be passed over as if it were a painful admission of imperfect sanity. Luckily the fight with Arthur Donnithorne, when the

flirtation begins to excite suspicion, reassures us. It shows that Adam can really be as great a fool as he ought to be; and afterwards when the whole story comes to light, his agony is as genuine and forcible as we can desire. Adam, in fact, is powerfully drawn from the striking scene, when he sits up at night to finish the coffin left by his drunken father and hears the mysterious stroke of the willow wand which intimates that the father is being drowned, down to the last interview with Hetty after her conviction. The character reacts, as we feel that it ought to react, under the given circumstances. If his later discovery of Dinah's merits does not strike us quite in the same way, we must sorrowfully admit that it is possible. Men do become commonplace and reasonable as they grow older.

Meanwhile, though I have spoken of *Adam Bede* from the point of view suggested by the author's theory, it is neither Dinah Morris nor Adam himself who really made the fortune of the book. *Adam Bede* for most of us means pre-eminently Mrs. Poyser. Her dairy is really the centre of the whole microcosm. We are first introduced to it as the background which makes the "kitten-like" beauty of Hester Sorrel irresistible to young Captain Donnithorne. But Mrs. Poyser is the presiding genius. She represents the very spirit of the place; and her influence is the secret of the harmony of the little world of squire and parson and parish clerk and schoolmaster and blacksmith and carpenter and shepherd and carter. Each of these types is admirably sketched in turn, but the pivot of the whole is the farm in which Mrs. Poyser displays her conversational powers. The little rustic

world is painted in colours heightened by affection. There is, it may be, a little more of Goldsmith's beautifying touch than of Crabbe's uncompromising realism. But it is marvellously life-like, and Mrs. Poyser's delightful shrewdness seems to guarantee the fidelity of the portraits. She has no humbug about her, and one naturally takes it for granted that they must be as she sees them. It is, indeed, needless to insist upon her excellence; for Mrs. Poyser became at once one of the immortals. She was quoted by Charles Buxton—as George Eliot was pleased to hear—in the House of Commons before she had been for three months before the public: "It wants to be hatched over again, and hatched different." One is glad to know that Mrs. Poyser's wit was quite original. "I have no stock of proverbs in my memory," said George Eliot; "and there is not one thing put into Mrs. Poyser's mouth that is not fresh from my own mint." She had written the dialogue with obvious enjoyment, and appreciated its merits herself. "You're mighty fond o' Craig," Mrs. Poyser had said "in confidence to her husband"; "but for my part, I think he's welly like a cock as thinks the sun's rose o' purpose to hear him crow." She said it to other people, it seems, for Mr. Irwine quotes the remark to his mother as one of the "capital things" he has heard her say. "That is an *Æsop's* fable in a sentence," he adds; and he remarks that Mrs. Poyser is "quite original in her talk, one of the untaught wits that help to stock a country with proverbs." It is not often that an author ventures to praise his own speeches; and that George Eliot did so shows how much Mrs. Poyser's special wit was one ingredient of her own intellectual tendency.

In her later novels one sometimes regrets that Mrs. Poyser did not come to the fore to temper the graver moods. Mrs. Poyser may take rank with Sam Weller as one of the irresistible humorists. She has a special gift for attracting us by the most unscrupulous feats of sophistry. Poor Molly breaks a jug, and has been just driven to tears by Mrs. Poyser's eloquence for her unparalleled clumsiness, when Mrs. Poyser repeats the feat, to the amusement of her husband. "It's all very fine to look on and grin," she retorts; "but there's times when the crockery seems alive, an' flies out o' your hand like a bird. . . . What is to be broke *will* be broke, for I never dropped a thing i' my life for want o' holding it, else I should never ha' kept the crockery all these 'ears as I bought at my own wedding." She quenches an outburst of laughter soon after by summoning up a sudden vision of her being laid up in bed, and the children dying, and the murrain coming among the cattle, and everything going to rack and ruin—a prophetic picture which, though logically irrelevant, is most effective rhetorically. Another brilliant specimen of the same figure of speech occurs when she is roused to speak her mind to the squire, who has hinted at giving the farm to a new tenant. "It's a pity," she says, "but what Mr. Thurle should take it, and see if he likes to live in a house wi' all the plagues o' Egypt in 't—wi' the cellar full o' water, and frogs and toads hoppin' up the steps by dozens—and the floors rotten, and the rats and mice gnawing every bit o' cheese, and runnin' over our heads as we lie i' bed till we expect 'em to eat us up alive—as it's a mercy they hanna eat the children long ago." It is superfluous to quote fragments of Mrs. Poyser's familiar



eloquence—spoilt by necessary curtailment—except to suggest the problem, Why is she so charming? The answer is, I suppose, in a general way to be found in the delicious contrast between Mrs. Poyser's intense shrewdness and strong affections, with the quick temper and the vivacity with which she snatches at the most preposterous flights of fancy which will bewilder and discomfit her antagonists for the moment. A logician might amuse himself by analysing her ingenious arguments. Meanwhile her love for her husband and the irrepressible Totty—one of the portraits which, without being sentimental, shows George Eliot's most feminine appreciation of the charms of childhood—and even her kindness to Hetty, though she does see through that young woman's weaknesses, entitles her to the regard felt for her by all readers. That regard, indeed, is so well established that I am only using fragments to recall, not to justify the universal sentiment. I will only note in passing that a full criticism of *Adam Bede* would have to touch upon many other subordinate characters. Bartle Massey, for example, the schoolmaster, is in his way, an admirable pendant to Mrs. Poyser. Adam Bede's mother is equally life-like, and the passage in which she speaks of her wedding was judiciously noticed by Charles Reade as a masterly touch of human nature. Seth Bede, I confess, bores me.

If I cannot say, therefore, that *Adam Bede* impresses me as the author intended it to impress her readers, I think that by a kind of felicitous accident it came to be a masterpiece in a rather different sense. The memory of Mrs. Samuel Evans brought up a vivid picture of the little world in which she moved; though

her world, as represented by Adam Bede and Mrs. Poyser themselves, looked upon Methodism as rather an intruding and questionable force than as the spiritual leaven which was to redeem it. George Eliot, meaning to set forth the beauty of Dinah Morris's character, incidentally comes to draw a more attractive picture of the sinners whom she ought to have awakened. Dinah gives up preaching when the Society decides against the practice, whereas her prototype, it is said, joined another sect rather than be silenced. Dinah settles down by her domestic hearth, and Adam remains a sound Churchman. He admits in his old age, we are told, that the excellent vicar, Mr. Irwine, "didn't go into deep speritlial experience," and only preached short moral sermons. Apparently Adam thought none the worse of him. He quotes Mrs. Poyser's dictum that Mr. "Irwine was like a good meal o' victual; you were the better for him without thinking on it; and Mr. Ryde [his successor] was like a dose of physic; he gripped you and worreted you, and after all he left you much the same." We get the impression that Mrs. Poyser and Adam took the most judicious view; and that the rustic congregation, with its "ruddy faces and bright waistcoats," which reposed in the great square pews and listened to Mr. Irwine's moral without attaching any particular meaning to theological formulæ, did very well without stronger spiritual stimulants. "The world," in Sir W. Besant's formula, "went very well then." *Adam Bede*, like *Waverley*, might have had for a second title 'Tis *Sixty Years Since*; and the verdict seems to be that the simple society of that period was sound at the core; wholesome and kindly, if not very exciting.

The pathos to be found in commonplace lives was the main topic of the *Scenes of Clerical Life*; and now, looking back with fondness to her early days, and through them to the early days of her parents, George Eliot finds a beauty not in the individuals alone, but in the whole quiet humdrum order of existence of the rustic population. Everybody is treated with a kindly touch. Even the seducer, Arthur Donnithorne, instead of being the wicked baronet who generally appears on such occasions, is a thoroughly amiable, if rather weak, young man, who is not aware of the sufferings of his victim till too late, and then does all he can to obviate unpleasant consequences. "At present," she says, writing a little later, my "mind works with most freedom and the keenest sense of poetry in my remotest past, and there are many strata to be worked through before I can begin to use, *artistically*, any material I may gather in the present." The world of Adam Bede clearly is the world of her first years, harmonised by loving memories and informed, no doubt, with more beauty than it actually possessed. Her philosophy, indeed, reminds her that the range of ideas of her characters was singularly narrow and hopelessly obsolete. She has no sympathy with the romanticism which leads to reactionary fancies. She is perfectly well aware of the darker sides of the past, though she does not insist upon them. She has herself breathed a larger atmosphere. Only her affectionate recognition of the merits of the old world makes one feel how much conservatism really underlay her acceptance, in the purely intellectual sphere, of radical opinions.

The *Scenes of Clerical Life* had made a more decided success with critics than with the public. *Adam Bede*

had an equal and triumphant success with both classes. The original agreement with Blackwood had been for £800 for four years' copyright. Seven editions and 16,000 copies were printed during the first year (1859). Blackwood acknowledged the success generously by another check for £800, and gave back the copyright. He offered at the same time £2000 for 4000 copies of her next novel, and proposed to pay at the same rate for subsequent editions. The pecuniary success put her at once and permanently beyond the reach of any pecuniary pressure. Meanwhile she had received hearty greetings on all sides. In April she notes that she has left off recording the "pleasant letters and words" that had come to her: "the success has been so triumphantly beyond anything I had dreamed of, that it would be tiresome to put down particulars." "Shall I ever," she asks herself, "write another book as true as *Adam Bede*?" The "weight of the future presses on me and makes itself felt even more than the deep satisfaction of the past and present." Old friends had been delighted. One of them, Mme. Bodichon, had discovered the authorship, though she had only inferred it from extracts in the reviews. Her friends the Brays were not so perspicacious, and were "overwhelmed with surprise" when in June she revealed the secret to them. She reopened her acquaintance with M. D'Albert by announcing to him that she had "turned out" to be, like him, "an artist," though in words, not with the pencil. Mr. Herbert Spencer wrote an "enthusiastic" letter, and declared that he felt the better for reading the book. Mrs. Carlyle felt herself in "charity with the whole human race" after the same experience, though her



husband apparently could not be persuaded to try whether his views of the race could be softened by the same application. Letters from Froude and John Brown of *Rab and his Friends* called forth grateful acknowledgments. Fellow-novelists were equally warm. Dickens made her personal acquaintance, and begged for a novel in *Household Words*. Charles Reade declared that "Adam Bede was the finest thing since Shakespeare." Mrs. Gaskell said how "earnestly, fully, and humbly" she admired both *Adam Bede* and its precursors. "I never read anything so complete and beautiful in fiction in my life before." Bulwer, with less expansiveness, pronounced the book to be "worthy of great admiration," and congratulated Blackwood upon his discovery. He thought, it seems, from a later note, that the defects of the book were the use of dialect and the marriage of Adam Bede. "I would have my teeth drawn," says George Eliot, "rather than give up either." One comic incident occurred amidst this general chorus of praise. The originals of some of the descriptions in the novel had been guessed by people familiar with the neighbourhood; and in searching for an author, they had guessed at a Mr. Liggins, who dwelt in that region. A Warwickshire friend, writing to the real author, asked her whether she had read the books written under the name of George Eliot, and told her the secret of the Liggins authorship. Mr. Liggins, he added, got no profit out of *Adam Bede*, and gave it freely to Blackwood. The incident was not unparalleled. A young lady, shortly after this time, made a false claim to one of Trollope's stories, then appearing anonymously in a magazine. The claim being taken seriously, she had not the

heart to disavow it; and her father soon afterwards called upon the proprietor to inquire indignantly why his daughter had been allowed to write gratuitously. It does not appear whether Mr. Liggins accepted the authorship or only refrained from a direct disavowal. The claim seems to have caused rather more vexation than was necessary; but the main result was that the secret soon became known. It had been revealed to Blackwood in the previous year (Feb. 1858), soon after the publication of the *Clerical Scenes*.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MILL ON THE FLOSS.

*ADAM BEDE* had not been long in the hands of readers when a new novel was begun. At the end of April 1859 George Eliot had finished a short story called "The Lifted Veil"—taken up as "a resource when her head was too stupid for more important work"—and was about to "rewrite" the first two chapters of the novel which ultimately received the name of *The Mill on the Floss*. The first volume was finished before October, the second on 16th January, and the third on 21st March 1860. It appeared at the beginning of April, rivalled *Adam Bede* in its immediate popularity, and sustained or increased her reputation with the most thoughtful readers. In one respect, as already intimated, it is clearly the most interesting of all her books. In the *Scenes of Clerical Life* she had made use of the stories current in the early domestic circle; in *Adam Bede* she had drawn a portrait of that circle itself; and she now took herself for a heroine, and the first two volumes become virtually a spiritual autobiography. The title originally suggested, "Sister Maggie," is really the most appropriate. The external circumstances have, of course, been altered. The scenery is supposed to be in Lincolnshire, and the town of St. Ogg's is said to represent Gainsborough. But her

native district still supplies the details. The "round pool," to which she had gone on fishing expeditions with her brother, and the "Red Deeps," which had been a favourite haunt, are transported from Griff to Dorlcote Mill. The attic to which Maggie retires in the mill is the attic to which George Eliot had retired in her father's house. Her brother, we are told, had already detected her in her first story. She was now revealed, not only to him, but to her old neighbours, by the closeness of her descriptions. The important point, however, is her identity with the heroine. The elder Tullivers do not represent her parents; and the brother Tom, it is to be hoped, was at most vaguely suggested by the real Isaac Evans. But Maggie Tulliver, spite of certain modifications—the remarkable personal beauty, for example, which has for good reasons to be bestowed upon her—evidently represents as clearly as possible what George Eliot would have been had she been transplanted in her infancy to some slightly different family in the same district. Although many of the best novels in the language are autobiographical, there is hardly one which gives so vivid and direct a representation of the writer's most intimate characteristics. It is proper, I believe, to speak of such writing as "subjective"—an epithet which sometimes suggests an erroneous inference. Every genuine description is subjective in the sense that it must give the writer's own impressions, and is not a mere adoption of language which has recorded the impressions of others. But it need not be "subjective" in the sense of giving the individual peculiarities alone. Self-knowledge implies also knowledge of our common human nature. The novelist speaks



for us because he speaks for himself. The actual "confession," of course, depends for its interest upon the interest of the character revealed; and if that character be one of great moral and intellectual power, and an impressive incarnation of an interesting type of the human species, the direct utterance of its emotions has a peculiar fascination. "To my feeling," said George Eliot, "there is more thought and a profounder veracity in *The Mill* than in *Adam*; but *Adam* is more complete and better balanced. My love of the childhood scenes made me linger over them, so that I could not develop as fully as I wished the concluding 'book,' in which the tragedy occurs, and which I had looked forward to with much attention and premeditation from the beginning." Bulwer had made this criticism, and had also found fault with the scene in which Maggie accepts Tom's dictation too passively. She admitted that he was right in both cases, and both remarks were, as we shall see, significant. *The Mill on the Floss*, indeed, considered simply as a story, obviously suffers from the disproportionate development of the earlier part; but I do not think that any reader could wish for a change which would sacrifice the revelation of character to the requirements of the plot. Taken by itself, the first part of *The Mill* represents to my mind the culmination of George Eliot's power. Maggie is one example of the feminine type which occurs with important modifications in most of the other stories. But George Eliot throws herself so frankly into Maggie's position, gives her "double" such reality by the wayward foibles associated with her nobler impulses, and dwells so lovingly upon all her joys and sorrows, that the character glows with

a more tender and poetic charm than any of her other heroines. I suppose that Dinah Morris would be placed higher in the scale of morality; but if the test of a heroine's merits be the reader's disposition to fall in love with her (and that, I confess, is my own), I hold that Maggie is worth a wilderness of Dinahs.

One result of this sympathy with her heroine is conspicuous. No book, I imagine, ever set forth so clearly and touchingly the glamour with which the childish imagination invests the trivial and commonplace. There is enough poetry in all of us in our earlier years to enable us to appreciate the truth, though rare genius is required to recall so vividly the old associations and to bring out so tenderly their pathetic side. We all have enough poetry left beneath our layers of commonplace to share Maggie's emotions in the attic, with its high-pitched roof, its worm-eaten floors and shelves, and dark rafters festooned with cobwebs, where she keeps her "Fetish": the trunk of an old doll, into whose head she drives nails in emulation of Jael's feat as pictured in the Family Bible. We can understand, too, the "dim delicious awe" produced by the "resolute din, the un-resting motion of the great stones" in the mill, where the meal pours down till the very spider-nets look like a fairy bulwark. Maggie speculated especially upon the "fat floury spiders," and their probable relations to spiders of the outside world. Toads and earwigs become actors in other little romances. She confides to her little cousin that Mrs. Earwig is running so fast to fetch a doctor for a small earwig that has fallen into the hot copper. Brother Tom shows his

matter-of-fact character by smashing the earwig "as a superfluous yet easy means of proving the entire unreality" of such a story. The imaginative faculty transfigures toads and earwigs and invests with mystery the round pool, framed with willows and tall reeds, where she delights in the "whispers and dreamy silences," and listens to the "light dipping sounds of the rising fish and the gentle rustling as if the willows and the reeds and the water lend their happy whispering also." Her life is to change, but the old joy can never be quite lost. "Our delight in the sunshine on the deep-bladed grass to-day would be no more than the faint perception of wearied souls if it were not for the sunshine and the grass in the far-off years which still live in us and transform our perception into love."

Meanwhile, however, imagination is a faculty which has its disadvantages when it is placed in uncongenial surroundings. Its possessor or victim has to suffer terrible raps over the knuckles from the Tom Tullivers. "Those bitter sorrows of childhood!" she exclaims, "when sorrow is all new and strange, when hope has not yet got wings to fly beyond the days and weeks, and the space from summer to summer seems measureless!" George Eliot insists upon this text, and the absurdity of telling a child that its real troubles are to come. "We have sobbed piteously, standing with tiny bare legs above our little socks, when we have lost sight of a mother or nurse," but we can no longer revive the poignancy of the moment. "Surely if we could recall that early bitterness and the dim guesses, the strangely perspectiveless conception of life that gave the bitterness its intensity, we should not pooh pooh the griefs of our children." I would not ven-

*since young  
so early*

ture to pronounce upon the general soundness of the doctrine; in that matter we all generalise from our private experience, and are very liable to illusions; but the truth for a child of Maggie's peculiarities is undeniable and most pathetic. When she is not only snubbed by Tom, but roused to jealousy by his kindness to her cousin Lucy, "there were passions at war in her to have made a tragedy, if tragedies were made by passion only; but the essential *τι μέγεθος* who was present in the passion was wanting in the action; the utmost Maggie could do, with a thrust of her small brown arm, was to push poor little pink-and-white Lucy into the cow-trodden mud." The remark indicates the curious power of the book. The chief actors are children, their surroundings are of the dullest and narrowest conceivable, and yet we are spectators of a drama with really tragic interest. "Not Leonore," we are told, "in that preternatural midnight excursion with her phantom lover, was more terrified than poor Maggie in her entirely natural ride on a short-paced donkey with a gipsy behind her, who considered that he was earning half-a-crown." The bray of another donkey under the setting sun becomes portentous, and the low cottages which she passes suggest a probable habitation of witches.

The *Mill on the Floss*, so far, is a singularly powerful presentation, by help of her personal memories, of the theme of Andersen's "ugly duckling"; the seed of genius cast upon barren ground and yet managing to find sufficient nurture from the most unpromising materials. It is the more effective because the tragic side is not too prominent. There is none of the brutal tyranny which crushes some children in



pathetic fiction. Maggie, on the whole, in spite of all her scrapes, has a good many happy hours, and is child enough to accept the unintentional stupidities of her family circle as part of the inevitable. She is not conscious of being a misunderstood genius; she only suffers because she has vague aspirations and longings, but does not feel herself to be enslaved or bound to overt revolt. The circle, forming the prose element against which her poetic impulses are to struggle, is drawn with a force and humour which, but for the author's distinct disavowal, would convince us that it was a study from the life. Indeed, though we have to admit that there was no actual counterpart of Mrs. Glegg or the Pullets, we must suppose that some of their characteristic traits were taken from real people, though more or less modified and put into different combinations. Certainly we seem to be reading a direct transcript from early recollections when we pay a visit to the Pullets with Mrs. Tulliver and her children, when Mrs. Pullet devoutly exhibits her new bonnet, and is moved by the solemnity of the occasion to thoughts of human mortality. "Ah," she said at last, "I may never wear it twice, sister, who knows?" "Don't talk o' that, sister," answered Mrs. Tulliver; "I hope you'll have your health this summer." "Ah, but there may come a death in the family, as there did soon after I had my green satin bonnet. Cousin Abbott may go, and we can't think o' wearing crape less nor half a year for him." "That *would* be unlucky," said Mrs. Tulliver, entering thoroughly into the possibility of an inopportune decease. The gloom becomes overpowering; and Mrs. Pullet, "beginning to cry," closes the scene worthily by saying, "Sister, if

you should never see that bonnet again till I'm dead and gone, you'll remember I showed it you this day." And so they descend to the amiable Mr. Pullet, who solaces his mind when at a loss for conversation with lozenges and peppermint-drops, and is the proud possessor of a musical-box. His profound respect for his wife is shown by his memory of the right time for taking her doctor's stuff. "There's the pills as before every other night, and the new drops at eleven and four, and the 'fervescing mixture' when agreeable," rehearsed Mr. Pullet, with a punctuation determined by a lozenge on his tongue. "Doctor Turnbull," he adds, "hasn't got such another patient as you in this parish, now old Mrs. Sutton's gone." "Pullet," says his wife, touched by this delicate compliment, "keeps all my physic bottles—did you know, Bessy? He won't have one sold. He says it's nothing but right folks should see 'em when I'm gone. They fill two o' the long storeroom shelves already—but," she added, beginning to cry a little, "it's well if they ever fill three. I may go before I've made up the dozen o' these last sizes." The conversation runs on with such admirable naturalness, that we can but take it as the echo of such talks as were once the staple of conversation at Chilvers-Coton. We may look out upon old farms as we are hurried past them in the railway and wonder whether they still shelter Tullivers and Dodsons, and possibly ask the more inscrutable question, whether the talk of some ladies nearer home may not in its essence resemble the remarks of Mrs. Pullet.

The previous books were meant as revelations of the romance to be found under the most commonplace

exteriors. It becomes a problem whether this bit of commonplace is not too sordid. It is "irradiated by no sublime principles, no romantic visions, no active self-renouncing faith, moved by none of those wild, uncontrollable passions which create the dark shadows of misery and crime—without that primitive rough simplicity of events, that hard submissive ill-paid toil, that childlike spelling out of what nature has written which gives its poetry to peasant life." George Eliot admits that she shares the sense of oppressive narrowness, but wishes to show how it acted upon the young souls immersed in it. And, after all, she holds that it had its good results. Its religion was simply blind acceptance of tradition, and its morality adherence to established customs. The religion meant going to church on proper occasions; being baptized, because otherwise one could not be buried; and taking care that there should be the "proper pall-bearers and well-cured hams at one's funeral." Mr. Tulliver took much the same view of the services as Tennyson's immortal farmer from the same region. He considered, however, that "church was one thing and common-sense another, and he wanted nobody to tell him what common-sense was." He shows a touch worthy of the "Northern Farmer" when he orders his son to record in the Family Bible a declaration that he will not forgive his enemy, and hopes that evil may befall him. There is a strain of the old Viking blood in him after all, and it is more or less shown in the morality. The Dodsons were "a very proud race"; no one should be able to tax them with a breach of traditional duty. So, even when Mrs. Glegg, the most nagging and contradictory of them all, quarrels with her sister, she

feels bound to leave their fair share of her property to her sister's children. Their pride was wholesome, as it identified honour with "perfect integrity, thoroughness of work, and faithfulness to admitted rules." Mr. Glegg, like his neighbours, was "near"; he had made money very slowly, by steady parsimony, and saving had become an end in itself. He would have thought it a "mad kind of lavishness" to give away a five-pound note to save a poor widow's furniture, but he was really sorry for her; and was as anxious to save other people's money as his own. The Tullivers had warmer hearts and more impulsive characters than their neighbours, and discharge their family duties from genuine affection as well as from a sense of traditional affection. Mr. Tulliver's kindness to his ruined sister atones for his recklessness and his perverse passion for "lawing"; and his love for his "little wench" gives her main consolation under the troubles of her childhood. Her sympathy for him under his troubles and illness is a natural stage in the development of her finer qualities.

So far, if it be true that George Eliot's fondness for the old memories had betrayed her into some disproportionate length, no one can deny the extraordinary skill and force with which the situation is prepared. We may miss at times the more idyllic elements represented by Mrs. Poyser's circle, though the charming pedlar Bob Jakin brings some of the old wit and quaint humour into the less exhilarating surroundings. At any rate, the mine is very effectually laid, and we now have to watch the explosion. Maggie, with her pathetic attempts to snatch at any floating bits of learning that may enable her intellectual wings



to expand, has gone through her creator's experience in a rather more trying form. She has had to feed upon Defoe's *History of the Devil*, and made attempts to draw honey from the Latin Grammar, Euclid, and Aldrich; and now that a happy chance has introduced her to a Kempis, we can see that she is fitted to receive consolation, under the dry and barren outward life, in some form of religious mysticism. When the sensitive and artistic Philip Wakem, made eager for consolation by his deformity and his own domestic difficulties, meets the beautiful young woman, we are also not surprised that her longings for sympathy should turn to a human object. On both sides there is ample opportunity for awaking love and pity. It is natural, again, that the position should bring her into collision with her brother. He has no turn for poetry and art and mysticism, but his plunge into difficulties has called out the sturdy qualities of the Tulliver race, and we sympathise with his energy in retrieving the family fortunes. The quarrel arises inevitably when he finds that his sister is in love with a youth, not only deficient in the manly qualities, but son and heir to the enemy against whom he has inscribed a vow of vengeance. That he should take a decided course of action under the circumstances is only to be expected. Nor, perhaps, is it surprising that he behaves like a brute. There is plenty of "heredity" to account for that. But here is a first difficulty. George Eliot admitted, as I have said, that the scene between brother and sister was not quite satisfactory. The young woman, with her high-wrought enthusiasm, submits too "passively," not to say, tamely, to his imperious interference. She confesses that she has done wrong, and

promises not to see her lover again in private. Tom's behaviour, I fancy, makes him simply offensive to most people, though it seems to be obvious that we are intended to retain a certain regard for him. The failure seems to me to be easily explicable. I heard once from a most intelligent lady of an elder generation that the agitation for women's rights was absurd, because as a matter of fact all women like, and always will like, to be slaves. Younger ladies, it is true, have assured me that this is a complete mistake, and that women have as strong an objection as men to be objects of tyranny. I should be afraid to express any opinion upon a question in which women must be the best judges. Yet I am half inclined to guess that, along with other conservative tendencies, George Eliot had inherited some sympathy with this older view. Of course, she would be the last person to approve the tyranny of brothers or husbands, and is only trying to do justice to the moral code accepted in St. Ogg's circles, of which it was a part that the family should be under masculine supremacy. The true difficulty is again, as I take it, that she was too thoroughly feminine to be quite at home in the psychology of the male animal. Her women are—so far as a man can judge—unerringly drawn. We are convinced at every point of the insight and fidelity of the analysis; but when she draws a man, she has not the same certainty of touch. She is, I have suggested, a little too contemptuous when the Samson yields to the Delilah; and when he asserts his privileges, his strength is apt to be too like brutality. Many rustic Tom Tullivers would, no doubt, ride roughshod over sisterly sensibilities; but if we are to retain sympathy for

their better nature, they should show more twinges of conscience. Tom's profound conviction that whatever he does is therefore right, is no doubt characteristic; but he might at least feel that he is doing a painful duty, and not be represented as utterly insensible to the claims of the old childish affections.

The comparative weakness, however, of masculine portraits has a more unpleasant result. She admits that the tragedy which follows is "not adequately prepared." She will "always regret" the want of fulness in the treatment of the third volume, due, as she says, to the *epische Breite* into which she was beguiled by love of her subject in its predecessors. But she defends the position itself, which many readers have condemned. "Maggie's position towards Stephen Guest—upon which the tragedy turns—is," she says, "too vital a part of my whole conception and purpose for me to be converted to the condemnation of it. If I am wrong there—if I did not really know what my heroine would feel and do under the circumstances in which I deliberately placed her—I ought not to have written this book at all, but quite a different work, if any. If the ethics of art do not admit the truthful presentation of a character essentially noble, but liable to great error—error that is anguish to its own nobleness—then it seems to me the ethics of art are too narrow, and must be widened to correspond with a widening psychology." Without discussing the "ethics of art," we may, I should think, fully agree that the critical canon thus abjured is erroneous. I am not aware, however, that any professor of æsthetics has laid down the rule that it is wrong to represent a noble character led into fatal error, and consequent remorse,

by its weaknesses. I should have supposed that nothing could be a more legitimate topic. George Eliot is unintentionally changing the issue upon which a defence is really required. We have sympathised keenly with Maggie. We understand the "strange thrill of awe" which passes through her when passages from the *Imitation of Christ* affect her like a strain of solemn music; when she infers that "the miseries of her young life had come from fixing her heart on her own pleasure"; and saw the possibility of looking at her own life as "an insignificant part of a divinely guided whole." She forms "plans of self-humiliation and entire devotedness, and fancies that renunciation will give her" the satisfaction for which she had so long been "craving in vain." "She had not perceived—how could she until she had lived longer?—the inmost truth of the old monk's outpourings that renunciation remains sorrow, though sorrow willingly borne. Maggie was still panting for happiness, and was in ecstasy because she had found the key to it." That is beautifully said, and is followed by an admirable account of her effort to attain the true spirit. When, again, Philip Wakem urges her not to stifle human affections, and persist in a "narrow asceticism," and assures her that "poetry and art and knowledge are sacred and pure," we can quite see the force of the argument, and understand why it should be the prologue to a love-scene a little later. After an appeal from Philip, Maggie at last "smiled with glistening tears, and then stooped her tall head to kiss the pale face that was full of pleading, timid love like a woman's. She had a moment of real happiness then—a moment of belief that, if there were sacrifice in this love, it was



all the richer and more satisfying." The "renunciation" and the desire for happiness may be reconciled.

With Tom Tulliver in the background, we have now abundant material for tragedy. But, at the opening of the third volume, we are abruptly introduced to a new character. Maggie has become a young lady, visiting her cousin. The "fine young man," snapping a pair of scissors in the face of the "King Charles" spaniel on Miss Lucy Deane's feet, "is no other than Mr. Stephen Guest, whose diamond ring, attar of roses, and air of nonchalant leisure at twelve o'clock in the day are the graceful and odoriferous result of the largest oil-mill and the most extensive wharf in St. Ogg's." In other words, Mr. Guest is a typical provincial coxcomb, with a certain taste for music, fitted no doubt to excite the admiration of young ladies at St. Ogg's. No attempt is made to suggest that he is anything but a self-satisfied commonplace young gentleman, who has condescended to accept the hand of Miss Deane. There is no difficulty in understanding him and his manners. When he dances with Maggie at a ball soon afterwards, and takes her into a conservatory, she looks very lovely as she stretches her arm to a rose. "Who has not felt the beauty of a woman's arm?—the unspeakable suggestions of tenderness that lie in the dimpled elbow, and all the varied gently lessening curves, down to the delicate wrist with its tiniest almost imperceptible nicks in the firm softness? A woman's arm touched the soul of a great sculptor two thousand years ago, so that he wrought an image of it for the Parthenon which moves us still as it clasps lovingly the timeworn marble of a headless trunk. Maggie's was such an arm as that,

and it had the warm tints of life. A mad impulse seized on Stephen; he darted towards the arm and showered kisses on it, clasping the wrist." It is curious that a little later (1864) George Eliot describes a "divine picture" by Sir F. Burton, in which a mailed knight is kissing the arm of a woman "by an uncontrollable movement." The subject, she says, is from a "Norse Legend." It "might have been made the most vulgar thing in the world—the artist has raised it to the highest pitch of refined emotion. The kiss is on the fur-lined *sleeve* that covers the arm, and the face of the knight is the face of a man to whom the kiss is a sacrament." Mr. Stephen Guest's performance does not strike one in the sacramental light. Maggie is properly angry and astonished at the time, but she soon becomes more amenable; and though she has scruples, and goes through a "fierce battle of emotions," she presently finds herself drifting to sea with him in a boat, and is only arrested by her conscience at the last moment when she is some way towards Gretna Green. Renunciation gets the better of the longing for happiness. "We can only choose," she says, "whether we will indulge ourselves in the present moment, or whether we will renounce that for the sake of obeying the divine voice within us, for the sake of being true to all the motives that sanctify our lives." To let this belief go would be to lose the only light in the darkness of life. She returns; but the knot is insoluble, and has to be finally cut by the waves of the Floss. George Eliot herself, admitting the need for more development, maintained, as we have seen, that the conclusion was right, and it has been defended upon the same ground. It is right, because the "psychology"

is right. Given the character and the circumstances, that is, this was the inevitable outcome. It is, no doubt, painful and disagreeable that a young woman of so many noble qualities should be guilty of such a step; but noble young women do make slips—that, I fear, is undeniable—and Maggie behaves as might be expected from her previous history. That is where I presume to doubt. Nobody, indeed, can deny that the passion of love is apt to generate illusions. Most men would probably be able to give examples from their own experience of the truth that young women who fall in love with somebody else have a singular inability for forming a correct judgment of the truly valuable qualities of masculine character. The fact has often been noticed, and is frequently turned to account by novelists. I will not deny that even Maggie's love for Stephen is conceivable. A young woman brought up in Dorlcote Mill was no doubt liable to be imposed upon by a false appearance of gentlemanlike character. But, one thing seems to be obvious. The whole theme of the book is surely the contrast between the "beautiful soul" and the commonplace surroundings. It is the awakening of the spiritual and imaginative nature and the need of finding some room for the play of the higher faculties, whether in the direction of religious mysticism or of human affection. That such a character, with little experience of life and with narrow education, should fall into error is natural, if not inevitable. But then the error should surely correspond to some impulse which we can feel to be noble. Maggie may be wrong in attributing high qualities to her hero; but we should feel that, in her eyes, he has high qualities,

and that the passion, if misdirected, is itself congenial to her better impulses. Miss Brontë's heroines fall in love with men whom the reader may dislike; but it is because they take the men to be embodiments of great masculine qualities—energy, honour, and real generosity—under rather crusty outsides. Therefore, though we may doubt the perspicacity of the hero-worship, we do not feel that the sentiment is in itself degrading. But there is this difficulty with poor Maggie. Her admiration for Mr. Guest would be natural enough in the average miller's daughter suddenly brought into a rather superior social scale and introduced to a well-dressed young man scented with "attar of roses." But as Maggie, by her very definition, as one may say, is a highly exceptional young woman, she should surely have something exceptional in her love. We can understand her sympathy with Philip Wakem, who is a man of heart, and whose physical infirmity is an appeal for pity; we could have understood it if she had fallen in love with the excellent vicar of St. Ogg's, who would have been able to talk about a Kempis and religious sentimentalism; and we might even have forgiven her if, after being a little overpowered by the dandified Stephen, she had shown some power of perceiving what a very poor animal he was. The affair jars upon us, because it is not a development of her previous aspirations, but suddenly throws a fresh and unpleasant light upon her character. No one will say that the catastrophe is impossible; he, at least, who would pronounce dogmatically upon such matters must be a bolder man than I am; but neither, I think, can any one say that it was inevitable, or could have been expected, given the circumstances and the



characters. The truth is, I think, different. George Eliot did not herself understand what a mere hair-dresser's block she was describing in Mr. Stephen Guest. He is another instance of her incapacity for portraying the opposite sex. No man could have introduced such a character without perceiving what an impression must be made upon his readers. We cannot help regretting Maggie's fate; she is touching and attractive to the last; but I, at least, cannot help wishing that the third volume could have been suppressed. I am inclined to sympathise with the readers of *Clarissa Harlowe* when they entreated Richardson to save Lovelace's soul. Do, I mentally exclaim, save this charming Maggie from damning herself by this irrelevant and discordant degradation.

## CHAPTER VII.

### SILAS MARNER.

• GEORGE ELIOT had not yet exhausted the materials of her early recollections. In the autumn of 1860 she wrote a short story called *Brother Jacob*, of which, as of its predecessor, *The Lifted Veil*, nothing need be said. But in the November of that year she began *Silas Marner*, which was finished in February 1861, and appeared by itself in March. Blackwood, she says, does not surprise her by calling it "rather sombre." She would not have expected it to interest any one except herself ("since Wordsworth is dead") had not Lewes been "strongly arrested" by it. The reference to Wordsworth is explained by her statement that it is meant to "set in a strong light the remedial influences of pure natural human relations." She felt as if it would have been more suitable to metre than to prose, except that there would have been less room for the humorous passages. It was suggested, it seems, by a childish recollection of a "linen-weaver with a bag on his back." The recollection, it must be admitted, can have counted for very little in the development of a story which is often considered to be her most perfect artistic performance. A curious literary coincidence—it can have been nothing more—is mentioned by Mathilde Blind. The Polish novelist,

Kraszewski, wrote a novel called *Jermola, the Potter*, said to be his masterpiece, and to have been translated into French, Dutch, and German. Jermola is an old servant who has retired to a deserted house in a remote village. He becomes almost apathetic in his solitude, till one day he finds a deserted infant under an oak. He devotes himself to the care of the child, and is helped in the unfamiliar process of nursing by a kind old woman. His energies revive, he takes up the trade of a potter to make a living for his new charge, succeeds in the business, and is brought into friendly relations with his neighbours. Finally, the child's parents turn up and reclaim their son. Jermola has to submit, but afterwards runs off with the boy into the forests. There the child dies of hardship, and Jermola ends his days as a melancholy hermit. The treatment, says Miss Blind, is entirely different from that of *Silas Marner*, but the leading motive is identical, and some of the details have, as will be seen, a curiously close resemblance. As there is clearly no question of copying, we must infer that both writers have worked out the logical consequences of similar situations; Kraszewski's version is more "sombre," though either his catastrophe or that of George Eliot is equally conceivable. The supposed event—the moral recovery of a nature reduced by injustice and isolation to the borders of sanity—strikes one perhaps as more pretty than probable. At least, if one had to dispose of a deserted child, the experiment of dropping it by the cottage of a solitary in the hope that he would bring it up to its advantage and to his own regeneration would hardly be tried by a judicious philanthropist. That, perhaps, is the reason which made George Eliot think

it more appropriate for poetry. In an idyll in verse one is less disposed to insist upon prosaic probabilities, or apply the rules of life suggested by the experience of the Charity Organisation Society. In *Silas Marner* George Eliot is a little tempted to fall into the error of the amiable novelists who are given to playing the part of Providence to their characters. It is true that the story begins by a painful case of apparent injustice. Silas Marner's life has been embittered by the casting of lots, which, on the principles of his sect, proves him to be guilty of the crime really committed by his accuser. But in the conclusion Providence seems to be making up for this little slip. The child is given to the weaver to recompense him for his sufferings, and, conversely, the real father is punished for neglecting his duty by the childlessness of his second marriage and the refusal of his daughter to accept him in place of her adopted parent. The excellent Dolly Winthrop sees a difficulty. She holds that the parson could probably explain the mistake about the casting of lots, though even he would have to tell it in "big words." But she is convinced that "Them above has got a deal tenderer heart than what I have." "There is plenty of trouble in the world, and things as we can never make out the rights on. And all as we've got to do is to trusten, Master Marner—to do the right thing as far as we know, and to trusten." If Marner had acted on that principle, he wouldn't have "run away from his fellow-creatures and been so lone." I will not quarrel with Mrs. Winthrop's solution of the ancient problem, nor with the moral which she deduces; and if the conclusion of the story seems to imply that compensation for



injustice may be expected in this life rather more confidently than experience proves, another moral is also suggested. Mr. Godfrey Cass is driven to prevarication and lying in order to conceal from his father that he has made a disreputable marriage, and to prevent his scamp of a brother from ousting him by revealing the result. His meanness answers admirably. The brother tumbles into a gravel-pit and is drowned, and the wife takes an overdose of laudanum at the right moment. He is freed from all fear of exposure, marries the right young woman, and has, on the whole, a successful life. This may console people who think that the justice of Providence is called into play too clearly. But in truth the whole story is conceived in a way which makes a pleasant conclusion natural and harmonious. It is saved from excess of sentimentalism by those admirable passages of humour, which, as we have seen, prevented the story from being put into verse. *Silas Marner*, as it turned out, was to be the last work in which George Eliot was to draw an idealised portrait of her earliest circle. It is full of admirable sketches from the squire to the poor weaver; and the famous scene at the "Rainbow" is perhaps the best specimen of her humour. The condescending parish clerk and the judicious landlord and the contradictory farrier, with their discussions of village traditions, their attempts at humour, and the curious mental processes which take the place of reasoning, are delicious and inimitable. One secret is that we can sympathise with their humble attempts at intellectual intercourse. The brutality which too often underlies a good deal of more refined satire comes out in the "unflinching frankness," which at the "Rainbow" is

taken for the "most piquant form of joke." The presumption of the assistant clerk, who hopes that he may have his own opinion of his vocal performances, is tempered by the remark that "there'd be two opinions about a cracked bell if the bell could hear itself," and finally crushed by the critic who tells him that his voice is "well enough when he keeps it up in his nose." It's your inside "as isn't right made for music; it's no better nor a hollow stalk." Much of the wit that passes current in more elegant circles differs from this, less in substance, than in the skill with which the sarcasm is ostensibly veiled. When Charles Lamb proposed to examine the bumps on the skull of an illiterate person, he was just as rude, though his rudeness is allowed to pass for harmless fun. The crude attempts of the natural man are redeemed from brutality by the absence of real ill-nature. So the argument as to reality of ghostly phenomena is a tacit parody upon a good deal of the controversy roused by "Psychical research." Some people, as the landlord urges, couldn't see ghosts, "not if they stood as plain as a pikestaff before 'em." My wife, as he points out, "can't smell, not if she'd the strongest of cheese under her nose. I never see a ghost myself; but then I says to myself, very like I haven't got the smell for 'em. I mean, putting a ghost for a smell, or else contrairiways. And so, I'm for holding with both sides." The farrier retorts by asking, "What's the smell got to do with it? Did ever a ghost give a man a black eye? That's what I should like to know. If ghos'es want me to believe in 'em, let 'em leave off skulking in the dark, and i' lone places—let 'em come in company and candles." "As if ghos'es 'ud want to be believed in

by anybody so ignirant!" replies the parish clerk. We have read something very like this, only expressed in the "big words" which Mrs. Winthrop left to the parson. One touch of blundering makes the whole world kin; and in these good people, with their primitive views of logic and repartee and their quaint theology, we may, if we please, see a satire upon their betters. Rather, if we accept George Eliot's view, we have a kindly sympathy for the old order upon which she looked back so fondly. A modern "realist" would, I suppose, complain that she has omitted, or touched too slightly for his taste, a great many repulsive and brutal elements in the rustic world. The portraits, indeed, are so vivid as to convince us of their fidelity; but she has selected the less ugly, and taken the point of view from which we see mainly what was wholesome and kindly in the little village community. *Silas Marner* is a masterpiece in that way, and scarcely equalled in English literature, unless by Mr. Hardy's rustics in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and other early works.

The novels hitherto noticed suggest an interesting comparison. M. Brunetière in his study of the *Roman Naturaliste* infers from them that George Eliot is the type and the founder of English "naturalism." English novelists are hardly to be classified in separate schools so distinctly as their French rivals; and I fancy that M. Brunetière slightly exaggerates the importance and extent of the new departure. Scott, for example, though called a "romantic," is as much a "naturalist" in his descriptions of Dandie Dinmont or Edie Ochiltree as George Eliot in her Adam Bede or Tulliver. But M. Brunetière shows admirably the

peculiar merits of the "English naturalism" which she represented. Her profound psychology, he says, her metaphysical solidity and her moral breadth, are displayed in that sympathetic treatment of the commonplace and ugly upon which I have had to insist. Sympathy of the heart and the intelligence is "the soul" of this "naturalisme." It preserved her, as M. Brunetière points out, not only from the coarse brutalities of M. Zola, but from the scorn for the bourgeois in which he finds the weak side of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. This is the great set-off against the superior skill in unity of composition and thorough finish of style which must be allowed to be a French characteristic. I will not try to expand a criticism which shows a true appreciation of George Eliot's most admirable quality. I will only add that in a comparison of George Eliot with French writers much would have to be said of George Sand, whom she had read with such enthusiasm, and in whose stories of French country life we may find the nearest parallel to *Silas Marner*. But though the affinity between the two great feminine novelists is sufficient to explain George Eliot's appreciation of her rival's sentiment and passion, it does not seem to have suggested any appropriation of artistic methods. One palpable difference is that while George Sand poured forth novels with amazing spontaneity and felicity, each of George Eliot's novels was the product of a kind of spiritual agony. Some consequences, good or bad, of George Eliot's method will become conspicuous.



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## CHAPTER VIII.

### MIDDLE LIFE.

THE publication of *Silas Marner* marks an important change in the direction of George Eliot's work. The memories of early days are no longer to be the dominant factor in her imaginative world; and henceforth one charm disappears, however completely, to the taste of some readers, it may be replaced by others. She has begun, as we have seen, to consider theories about the relations of ethics and æsthetics and psychology; and hereafter the influence of her theory upon her writing will be more obvious. This brings one in sight of certain general canons of criticism, upon which I do not desire to touch any further than is necessary for an appreciation of George Eliot herself. Yet the moral and philosophical implications of her novels are so prominent that it is impossible to omit altogether one or two questions as to their propriety. Many critics seem to lose their temper at any suggestion that a poem or a novel can have any legitimate didactic purpose. Everybody must sympathise with their annoyance. It is undeniably vexatious to take up a novel and find that it is a pamphlet in disguise, and that the envelope of fiction merely coats the insipid pill of a moral platitude. We have all suffered from such well-meant impositions in our childhood; "we," I mean, who

Problem?  
in complete  
Cohesive, indivisible

undeniable  
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were born in the good old days when children read the *Parent's Assistant* and *Hymns for Infant Minds*. Somehow many of the old stories with a moral were very delightful. I am still grateful to the author of *Sandford and Merton*, though I fear that I did not assimilate the ethical teaching of the excellent Mr. Barlow. The objection, however, expresses a most undeniable and indeed painfully obvious proposition. There is, beyond all dispute, a fundamental distinction between the literature of the imagination and the literature of science. "We need not say," observes the historian of King Valoroso, "that blank verse is not argument." A novelist's facts can prove nothing, for the simple reason that they are fictions; and his narrative, when it is reasoning in disguise, becomes intolerable. But still we must ask, What is a poor novelist to do who happens to have been impressed by some of the great masters of thought, such as Plato or Spinoza, whose philosophies are embodied poetry? Is he to forget all the thoughts that have occurred to him in his philosophical capacity, and to write as though he had no more speculations about the world or human nature than the most frivolous of his readers? If his "philosophy" has really modified his own microcosm, can he drop it when he describes the world? And why should he be called upon to drop it? Must he not, at any rate, have some tinge of psychology? When Fielding wrote *Tom Jones*, the first great English novel upon modern lines, he announced that he took "human nature" for his subject; and all his successors have aimed, according to their capacity, at providing us with studies of the same subject from different points of view. We might

describe this by saying that fiction must be applied psychology. The phrase, no doubt, would startle innocent readers who fear the intrusion of some hideous scientific doctrine. Yet it is a way of stating a harmless commonplace. Shakespeare was, no doubt, a very different writer from Professor Bain. He did not write a treatise upon the *Emotions and the Will*; but when he described Hamlet, he imagined a character which forcibly illustrates the relation between those faculties. The merit of the character depends upon the insight, and therefore upon the correctness of the psychology, though Shakespeare had not read Bain, nor even Bacon, and had never thought of the possibility of any such science, or of taking a scientific view at all. To George Eliot, of course, various psychological theories, Mr. Herbert Spencer's and others, were familiar. They were too familiar, we may fancy, when in defending Maggie Tulliver she appeals, as I have said, to the desirability of conforming to enlightened expositions of modern psychology. That may suggest a possible danger—the danger of constructing her characters out of abstract formulæ instead of reversing the process. But certainly it was not any abstract theory that taught her that a girl of Maggie's character would be likely to comfort herself with the mysticism of a Kempis, or to fall in love with Stephen Guest. She simply knew the fact from her own experience or her observation of others. But not the less, we may say without offence that her insight is justified by psychology, and that Maggie, like Hamlet, is profoundly interesting—not because her character has been constructed from psychological formulæ, but because when presented it offers pro-

blems to the psychologist as fascinating as any direct autobiography. The truthfulness goes far beyond any explanation from our crude guesses at the appropriate scientific formulæ. The imaginative intuition presents the concrete reality which no theorist can analyse into its constituent elements, and we can recognise, though we cannot logically prove, its fidelity and subtlety. Nor need we really be frightened by the "philosophy." There is a rather quaint entry in her diary about this time: "Walked with George over Primrose Hill. We talked of Plato and Aristotle." We may dread a possible intrusion of disquisitions upon the theories of those sages into the uncongenial sphere of fiction as well as into familiar talk. But, so far as we have yet gone, I cannot perceive any ground for offence of that kind. George Eliot was a "philosopher" in the sense that she had reflected long and seriously with all her very remarkable intellectual power upon some of the greatest problems which can occupy the mind. She had, in particular, thought of the part which is played by the religious beliefs and their real meaning and value. She had accepted, more or less, a particular system, though hitherto at least she made no special reference to it, and certainly did not change her novels into propagandist manifestoes. What, in fact, she had acquired was a cordial respect and sympathy for creeds embodied even in crude and superstitious dogmas; and she had, therefore, described many types, which in less thoughtful minds suggested only absurdities and provoked caricatures, with the intention of laying stress upon the nobler aspirations of such humble people as Silas Marner and Dolly Winthrop. If by "philosophy" we understand some



metaphysical system constructed by logical subtlety, it has certainly no direct relation to poetry; but if it corresponds to that state of mind in which the varying beliefs and instincts, even of the vulgar, have been considered with a desire to understand and appreciate their value, then it is likely, I fancy, to give harmony and sympathetic warmth to pictures of human life. George Eliot's merit in these novels is just proportioned to our sense that we are looking through the eyes of a tender, tolerant, and sympathetic observer of the aspirations of muddled and limited intellects.

This suggests one other stumbling-block. George Eliot speaks, we have seen, of the "ethics of art," and to some people this appears to imply a contradiction in terms. Esthetic and ethical excellence, it seems, have nothing to do with each other. George Eliot repudiated that doctrine indignantly, and I confess that I could never quite understand its meaning. The "ethical" value of artistic work, she held, is simply its power of arousing sympathy for noble qualities. The "artist," if we must talk about that personage, must, of course, give true portraits of human nature and of the general relations of man to the universe. But the artist must also have a sense of beauty; and, among other things, of the beauty of character. He must recognise the charm of a loving nature, of a spirit of self-sacrifice, or of the chivalrous and manly virtues. He shares, indeed, with the scientific observer the obligation of seeing things as they are; and must not only admit the prevalence of evil, but see even what "soul of goodness" is to be found in things evil. He must be as absolutely impartial as the physiologist describing the physical organisation.

But the impartiality does not imply insensibility. The fairest statement of the facts ought, if our morality be sound, to bring out the beauty of the moral character most fully. In fact, the charm of all the great novelists, from Cervantes downwards, consists essentially in the power with which they have drawn attractive heroes, and won love both for them and their creators. If anybody holds that morality is a matter of fancy, and that the ideal of the sensualist is as good as that of the saint, he may logically conclude that the morality of the novelist is really a matter of indifference. I hold myself that there is some real difference between virtue and vice, and that the novelist will show consciousness of the fact in proportion to the power of his mind and the range of his sympathies. Whether, as a matter of fact, novels do exert much ethical influence is another question; and the answer depends a good deal upon the character of the readers. But I cannot doubt that one secret of George Eliot's power lay in a sympathy with many types in which was essentially implied a power of responding spontaneously to noble and tender sentiment.

George Eliot's theory of the relation of novels to morality appears to me to be so far essentially sound. It must be admitted, however, that theories are dangerous things. They become shackles or suggest erroneous applications of power. They are dangerous to the spontaneity which marks a true imaginative inspiration. The writer who wishes to enforce some moral maxim is apt not only to pervert facts, but to force his humour. He cudgels his brain into framing illustrations which he takes for proofs. When this error

is avoided, even the most direct didactic intention may cease to be mischievous. Richardson's novels, for example, were gigantic tracts, written deliberately and intentionally to enforce certain moral doctrines. That did not prevent *Clarissa Harlowe* from being one of the great novels of the world, nor was the *Nouvelle Héloïse* of his disciple, Rousseau, less important on account of its didactic purpose. It does not matter so much why a writer should be profoundly interested in his work, nor to what use he may intend to apply it, as that, somehow or other, his interest should be aroused, and the world which he creates be a really living world for his imagination. This suggests the difficulty about George Eliot's later writings. The spontaneity of the early novels is beyond all doubt. She is really absorbed and fascinated by the memories tinged by the old affections. We feel them to be characteristic of a thoughtful mind, and so far to imply the mode of treatment which we call philosophical. Her theories, though they may have guided the execution, have not suggested the themes. A much more conscious intention was unfortunately to mark her later books, and the difficulties resulted of which I shall have to speak.

The Leweses had lived at 8 Park Street, Richmond, from 1855 till the end of 1858. They then moved to Holly Lodge, where she formed an intimate friendship with the Congreves. Mr. Congreve was a leading member of the Positivist Society, which had much of her sympathy in the following years. In 1860, after the publication of the *Mill on the Floss*, they moved again to 16 Blandford Square. The union with Lewes had involved a breach with many of her early friends,

and in some cases the separation was obviously painful. She declares that it was never a trial to her to have been cut off from what is called the "world," and thinks that she "never loved her fellow-creatures the less for it." Still she has a "peculiar regard" for those who stood by her at the time. "The list of those who did so," she adds, "is a short one, so that I can often and easily recall it." She explains a few days afterwards that she has made it a rule never to pay visits. "Without a carriage, and with my easily perturbed health, London distances would make any other rule quite irreconcilable for me with any efficient use of my days, and I am obliged to give up the *few* visits which would be really attractive and fruitful in order to avoid the *many* visits which would be the reverse." Other reasons for the same course are obvious; but those mentioned were, no doubt, genuine and sufficient. The rest of her life was passed with very little indulgence in society. Lewes's children formed part of the household, though they were mainly educated abroad. They were on thoroughly affectionate terms with her; and, for the most part, she led a quiet domestic life, finding her chief recreation in music. She read, she says, slowly; but she read much, eschewing most modern literature of the lighter kind, and absorbing very thoroughly what she did read. The *Life*, afterwards published by Mr. Cross, was made upon the plan, no doubt the right one, of telling her story from her own letters. There were, however, few incidents to be told; and Lewes undertook most of her correspondence. One result is that comparatively little is told in her letters of her later mental history. A great part of the correspondence



consists of accounts of holiday tours, which cannot be said to have any remarkable interest. In 1860, after finishing the *Mill on the Floss*, she made a three months' tour in Italy. Visits to Italy have been a turning-point in the lives of many great English writers; and this tour had, as we shall see, a very important effect upon George Eliot. The diary and letters, however, in which it is described leave a disappointing blank. The Leweses saw Rome, Naples, Florence, Venice, Milan, and other famous places; went most conscientiously through all the regular sights; and, of course, made plenty of judicious and intelligent remarks. In Florence, for example, they admire "Brunelleschi's mighty dome" and "Giotto's incomparable campanile." They visit the palaces and the churches, and we have a list of the art treasures which specially attract them in the Pitti Palace and the Uffizi Gallery. In the Pitti Palace "there is a remarkably fine sea piece by Salvator Rosa; a striking portrait of Aretino, and a portrait of Vesalius by Titian; one of Inghirami by Raphael; a delicious rosy baby—future cardinal—lying on a silken bed; a placid, contemplative young woman, with her finger between the leaves of a book, by Leonardo da Vinci"—and so forth. No doubt it is all true; only one has read something very like it before; and with the help of Baedeker and Murray one might make out such a list without being a great author. Of course, it would be absurd to infer that George Eliot did not receive many impressions which she did not confide to her diary. I must, however, confess that there is, to my mind, something characteristic in the docility with which she accepts the part of the intelligent sightseer. There

are plenty of appreciative remarks ; but none of those brilliant flashes with which Ruskin could light up the well-worn topics of descriptive enthusiasm, and couch our dull eyes to new aspects of familiar beauties. We feel that the man of genius gives his personal impressions, which are, therefore, more or less governed by accident or prejudice, but which, nevertheless, extort a partial assent, and at the lowest make us more vividly conscious of one element in our emotions. George Eliot, so far as this diary goes, seems to be simply recording the verdicts already pronounced by the most enlightened and respectable authorities.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ROMOLA.

THE inference which I have just suggested may seem to be contradicted by facts. While at Florence George Eliot conceived "a great project," of which she wrote to Blackwood during her homeward journey. She is anxious to keep it secret, and it will require a great deal of "study and labour," but she is "athirst to begin." The project, as she shortly afterwards explains, is for a historical novel, the scene to be Florence, and the period that of Savonarola's career. She postponed the work, however, till she had finished *Silas Marner*, and then made another visit to Florence in the spring of 1861. She spent thirty-four days there in May and June, devoting the morning hours to "looking at streets, books, and pictures, in hunting up old books at shops and stalls, or in reading at the Magliabecchian Library." She feels "very brave," and enjoys the thought of work. "It may turn out," she adds, "that I can't work freely and full enough in the medium I have chosen, and in that case I must give it up; for I will never write anything to which my whole heart, mind, and conscience don't consent; so that I may feel it was something—however small—which wanted to be done in this world, and that I am just the organ for that small bit of work."

Nobody, it may safely be said, could have undertaken a great task in a more conscientious spirit. She was, as usual, tormented by "hopelessness and melancholy." In August I "got," she says, "into a state of so much wretchedness in attempting to concentrate my thoughts on the construction of my novel, that I became desperate, and suddenly burst my bonds, saying, I will not think of writing." A week later, however, she conceives her plot "with new distinctness." Gradually she gets to work, and "crams"—if the word may pass—with amazing diligence. A list of the books which she read during the last half of 1861 gives some illustration of the course of study. Among them are Villari's and Burlamacchi's lives of Savonarola, Machiavelli, Petrarch, and other Italian authors, Sismondi's history of the Italian republics, besides various excursions into Gibbon, Hallam, Heeren, and Muratori, and occasional digressions into other literary regions. She began *Romola* "again" on January 1, 1862, and a note of three weeks later is suggestive. She has been "detained from writing by the necessity of gathering particulars, first, about Lorenzo de' Medici's death; secondly, about the possible retardation of Easter; third, about Corpus Christi Day; fourthly, about Savonarola's preaching in the Quaresima of 1492." She also finished *La Mandragola*—a second reading for the sake of Florentine expressions—and began *La Calendra*. The question will intrude, What would have become of *Ivanhoe* if Scott had bothered himself about the possible retardation of Easter? The answer, indeed, is obvious, that *Ivanhoe* would not have been written. One of the results to George Eliot of this excessive conscientiousness is what might be anticipated. She has looked



into some of the notebooks in which she recorded her former fits of depression; "but," she says, "it is impossible for me to believe that I have ever been in so unpromising and despairing a state as I now feel." She has, however, made a start, and is as usual encouraged by Lewes's applause.

Soon after this George Smith, the eminent publisher, offered £10,000 for the copyright of the new novel, of which some report had got abroad. He wished it to appear in the *Cornhill Magazine*, which was still in its brilliant youth. Thackeray was just retiring from the editorship, but he and many others of the most eminent writers of the day were still contributors. George Eliot had only written about sixty pages of her story, and was still in the depths of depression. She doubted whether it would ever be finished or ever good for anything. Offers of £10,000 are cheering even to the most high-minded authors. Greater sums have been made by successful novelists in recent years, but at that time the proposal was one, as Lewes said, of "unheard-of magnificence." She declined it at first on the ground of her unwillingness to begin the publication at the early date first fixed by Smith (May). Afterwards, however, she accepted £7000 for its appearance in the *Cornhill*, where it accordingly came out in fourteen parts, from July 1862 to August 1863. She had finished the last number on the 9th June 1863. Lewes advised her to accept this periodical mode of publication, because he thought that the book would have the advantage of being studied slowly and deliberately, instead of being read at a gallop. It is understood that the experiment was not a success in the magazine from the com-

mercial point of view. To make up in some degree for this disappointment, she made a present to the *Cornhill* of *Brother Jacob*—the short and not very satisfactory story previously written. *Romola* was not well adapted for being broken up into fragments, and some people, it appears, evaded Lewes's ingenious trap. They waited till the work came out as a whole, or preferred not reading it at all to reading it "slowly." Perhaps it was too good for an audience of average readers. She received a great deal of pretty encouragement "from immense big-wigs—some of them saying that *Romola* is the finest book they ever read." Some "big-wigs" were less enthusiastic, but the more orthodox opinion was that *Romola* was a literary masterpiece, though full recognition of its merits was a proof of superior taste. The success, to whatever it amounted, had been won at a heavy cost. She felt at times as though she were working under a heavy leaden weight. The writing "ploughed into her" more than any of her other books. She began it, she said, as a young woman, and finished it as an old woman.

It would be absurd to speak without profound respect of a book which represents the application of an exceptionally powerful intellect carrying out a great scheme with so serious and sustained a purpose. The critic may well be unwilling to place himself in the seat of judgment, or to suppose that he can divine with any confidence what will be the opinion of posterity, if that vague and multitudinous body troubles itself to arrive at any definite opinion on the matter. On the other hand, it is not very difficult to say what one thinks oneself, and one may hope to

suggest a remark or two which may be worth at least the trouble of refuting. *Romola* is to me one of the most provoking of books. I am alternately seduced into admiration and repelled by what seems to me a most lamentable misapplication of first-rate powers. I will speak frankly on both topics, without pretending to reach a precise valuation of merits.

The "historical novel" is a literary hybrid which is apt to offend opposite sides. Either the historian condemns it for its inaccuracy, or the novel-reader complains of its dulness. It is hard to avoid that Scylla and Charybdis. In my youth, I remember that classical students used to pore over two lively works, *Gallus* and *Charicles*, which represented the efforts of a German professor to empty a dictionary of classical antiquities into the framework of a novel. They were no doubt accurate, but I don't know whether anybody ever read them through. Scott's historical romances, on the other hand, fascinated the world, but are generally marked by a gallant indifference to any quantity of anachronisms. A historical critic, I suppose, would tear *Ivanhoe* to pieces, and forbid any student to read a book which would confuse his ideas in direct proportion to the literary attractiveness. Of course, we may request the historical critic to mind his own business. I have often thought that the beginning of *Ivanhoe*, the scene in the forest where Gurth and Wamba are chatting at the foot of the old barrow, and encounter the Templar and the Prior on their way to Cedric's house, is the best opening of a story ever written. It is inimitably graphic and picturesque, and introduces us at once to a set of actors most dramatically contrasted. Moreover, the

interest does not flag till certain unfortunate concessions to the old-fashioned rules of story-telling spoil the concluding scenes. Still it is true that the indifference to accuracy, or even possibility, forces one to admit that it requires a rather juvenile readiness to accept the obvious unrealities. It suggests the thought that the charm might be even heightened if, for example, Robin Hood and Friar Tuck had a little stronger resemblance to real or at least possible outlaws. The problem had been attacked by two or three of George Eliot's contemporaries. Bulwer in *Rienzi* had, like George Eliot, found a theme in Italian history, besides dealing with Harold and with Warwick the *Last of the Barons*. Though Freeman admired *Harold*, and George Eliot read *Rienzi* respectfully, I do not suppose that these rapid dashes into a mixture of fiction, history, and political philosophy can now interest any one. Kingsley in *Hyperion* and *Westward Ho!* had shown abundant vigour as a story-teller, in spite of a large infusion of the religious and political pamphleteer; but did not convince readers that he had given the true spirit of his periods. Charles Reade's remarkable novel *The Cloister and the Hearth*, which appeared in 1861, was a more serious attempt to make general history into fiction, and has been greatly admired by some eminent critics, such as Mr. Swinburne, who possibly have in mind the comparison with *Romola*. I only mention these books, however, to justify the remark that, in a period when the serious study of history was developing, the attempt to combine the vigour of Scott with more thorough knowledge of facts represented a very natural and plausible enterprise.



It may be taken for granted that the first condition of success is that you should become a contemporary of the society described. It is no easy task to go back for some centuries; to immerse yourself so thoroughly in the extinct modes of thought and sentiment that you can instinctively feel what the actors would have felt under the supposed circumstances. You can see into the mind of a British rustic of sixty years ago, especially if you happen to have been his daughter; but to get back to the inhabitant of Florence in the fifteenth century requires a more difficult transformation. Did George Eliot achieve it even approximately? To that, as it seems to me, there can be but one answer. She saw most clearly that the feat was necessary. She tried to qualify herself most industriously, but the very nature of her preparation shows the extreme difficulty, or, as I think, the impracticability of the task. "She spent," says an admiring critic, "six weeks" (really seven) "in Florence in order to familiarise herself with the manners and conversation of the inhabitants." In spite of this, it is said, her characters, when she began to write, not only "refused to speak Italian to her, but refused to speak at all." By hard reading, however, she reduced "these recalcitrant spirits to order," and "succeeded so well, especially in her delineation of the lower classes, that they have been recognised by Italians as true to life." The Italians are an eminently intelligent as well as an eminently courteous people; and we will hope that these anonymous critics had not to put any great strain upon their consciences. Yet one cannot help contrasting this initiation into the Italian characteristics

with the unconscious process which had lasted for twenty years at Chilvers-Coton. Seven weeks is a brief period for acclimatisation in a new social atmosphere. If an intelligent Italian lady had spent seven weeks at the Charing Cross Hotel, walked diligently about Leicester Square and the Strand, read steadily at the British Museum, and rummaged old bookshops in back streets, how much knowledge would she have acquired of the British costermonger? No doubt with the help of a few books on London labour, and study of Sam Weller's cockney slang, she might manage to make him talk and behave himself in such a way that a critic could not put his finger upon any directly assignable blunder. There is, too, a certain likeness between human beings everywhere, which might save the costermonger from being a mere monstrosity. But one would not expect a very vivid realisation of the genuine Englishman; nor can I see any indications that the description of the Italian "lower classes" in *Romola* gets beyond careful observation of costume and commonplace. George Eliot had not, like some novelists, been primarily interested in a period, steeped her mind in its literature simply for the love of it, and then felt a prompting to give form to her impressions. "They," said Scott, speaking of certain imitators, "have to read old books and consult antiquarian collections to get their knowledge. I write because I have long since read such works, and possess, thanks to a strong memory, the information which they have to seek for."<sup>1</sup> George Eliot had, it is to be presumed, a fair knowledge of the general outlines of history. She came to Florence as a highly intelligent

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, i. 275.

sightseer; and it then struck her that "the place would make a picturesque background, and that the Savonarola period offered a number of interesting situations. She proceeded to get up the necessary knowledge; but with the result like that which happens when a manager presents *Julius Cæsar* or *Coriolanus* in the costume "of the period." The costume may be as correct as the manager's archæological knowledge allows, but Julius Cæsar and Coriolanus remain what Shakespeare made them, not ancient Romans at all, but frankly and unmistakably Elizabethans.

Meanwhile the attempt to be historically accurate has a painfully numbing effect on her imagination. She seems to be always trembling at the possibility of an intruding anachronism. She tells an admirable critic, R. H. Hutton, that "there is scarcely a phrase, an incident, an allusion [in *Romola*] that did not gather its value to me from its supposed subservience to my main artistic purpose." She always strives after as full a vision of the medium in which a "character moves as of the character itself. The psychological causes which prompted me to give such details of Florentine life and history as I have given are precisely the same as those which determined me in giving the details of English village life." That, no doubt, is perfectly true; but then she had seen the English details with her own eyes, and she only makes a judicious selection from authorities when describing Florentine details. There was, it appears, an article of dress called a "scarsella," which always gets upon my nerves in *Romola*. The thing will intrude without any (to me) perceptible relation to her "main artistic purpose." The scarlet waistcoats and brand-new white smock-frocks in *Adam*

*Bede* make a picture at once. We see the rustics on their way to the squire's feast; but this wretched scarsella worries me, and only suggests a hint for Leighton's illustrations. A more important result of this weakness is shown in another case defended by George Eliot herself. She complains that "the general ignorance of old Florentine literature" and other causes have led to misunderstandings of many parts of *Romola*—"the scene of the quack doctor and the monkey, for example, which is a specimen not of humour as I relish it, but of the practical joking which was the amusement of the gravest old Florentines, and without which no conception of them would be historical. The whole piquancy of that scene in question was intended to lie in the antithesis between the puerility which stood for wit and humour in the old republic, and the majesty of its front in graver matters." She appeals to the precedent of the chase of the false herald in *Quentin Durward*, which makes Louis XI. and Charles of Burgundy "laugh even to tears." Now, I am quite unable to speak of the historical accuracy. All one can say is that if the ancient Florentines laughed so heartily at the dreary joke of imposing a monkey upon a quack for a baby, they must have been duller than one would have supposed. The precedent from Scott is curiously inapplicable. The scene in *Quentin Durward* is effective and an essential part of the story, because the "joke" shows both the brutality of the performers and the cunning of Louis XI. The king is skilfully getting rid of a cast-off agent in his intrigues against Charles with the help of Charles himself. To detail a wearisome practical joke in all its native unadulterated badness in



order to make a contrast with other parts of the book is a hazardous experiment. It is to be deliberately dull, because history proves that people could be dull four centuries ago. The truth is that in her English books George Eliot can make bad joking amusing, because she makes us smile not at the joke, but at the jokers. The talkers at the "Rainbow" are inimitable, because their talk is so pointless. Here the incongruity which is to interest us has to be gradually inferred from subsequent reflection, and the writer falls into the common error of boring us by describing bores.

B These are trifling illustrations of the more general difficulty. *Romola* is to give us the spirit of the Renaissance. It requires no dissertation to show why the Renaissance should have a surpassing charm for the imagination. There is, I suppose, no book which opens the eyes of the respectable modern reader with more startling effect than the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini in the next generation. The combination of artistic inspiration, intellectual audacity, gross superstition, and supreme indifference to morality, gives the shock of entering a new world where all established formulæ break down, or are in a chaotic state of internecine conflict. When we take up a book in which one is to be a contemporary with the Borgias, and to have personal interviews with Machiavelli, we may expect a similar sensation. We are to be spectators of a state of things in which the elementary human passions have been let loose, when violence and treachery are normal parts of the day's work, where new intellectual horizons have opened, and yet the old creeds are still potent, and there is the strangest

mingling of high aspirations and brutal indulgence, when the nobler and baser elements of belief are so strangely blended that the ruffian is still religious, and the enlightened reformer fanatically superstitious. If anybody derives any vivid impressions of such a world from *Romola*, his eyes must be much keener than mine. George Eliot has, it must be noticed, chosen one of the two alternatives which are open to the historical novelist. She deals with a private history and the great public characters, and their political proceedings remain for the most part in the background. Savonarola, indeed, has to act in the story as well as in the history. Hutton considers the portrait of the reformer to be one of George Eliot's great triumphs, and appeals especially to one scene. I am the more glad to be able to point to an appreciative and genial criticism, as I have to confess my inability to accept it. I should have taken the same scene for the clearest illustration of failure. The prophet is in his cell. He is trying to make up his mind to accept the test proposed by his enemies. Representatives of both parties are to walk through fire, counting upon a miraculous intervention; the flames are to burn the heretic and spare the orthodox. Savonarola's enthusiasm prompts him to run the risk; but when he tries to imagine the scene, the flesh shrinks, he begins to suspect that the appeal may be presumptuous, and is well aware at the bottom of his mind that it is a trap devised by his enemies. To show Savonarola tortured by these conflicting impulses would no doubt require the highest dramatic genius. What we really have is not the concrete man at all, but a long and very able psychological analysis of his mental state. A

bit of it gets into inverted commas to pass for a soliloquy; but instead of seeing and hearing Savonarola, we are really listening through several pages to a highly intelligent lecture upon an interesting specimen. The style becomes cumbrous and flagging. I venture to quote a long sentence as a specimen of George Eliot at her worst. The acceptance of the ordeal is inevitable: "Not that Savonarola had uttered and written a falsity when he declared his belief in a future supernatural attestation of his work; but his mind was so constituted that while it was easy for him to believe in a miracle which, being distant and undefined, was screened behind the strong reasons he saw for its occurrence, and yet easier for him to have a belief in inward miracles such as his own prophetic inspiration and divinely-wrought intuitions, it was at the same time insurmountably difficult to him to believe in the probability of a miracle which, like this of being carried unhurt through the fire, pressed in all its details on his imagination and involved a demand not only for belief but for exceptional action." Savonarola's mind was surely, in this respect, constituted like most people's; we all think that we can bear the dentist's forceps till we get into his armchair; but this almost Germanic concatenation of clauses not only puts such obvious truths languidly, but keeps Savonarola himself at a distance. We are not listening to a Hamlet, but to a judicious critic analysing the state of mind which prompts "to be or not to be." The same languor affects all the historical framework of the story. We come upon many scenes which seem to demand a forcible presentation: the entry of the French into Florence; the "bonfire of Vanities"; and the strange

tragicomedy of the ordeal; but when we want to see the crowd and bustle and the play of popular fun and passion, we get careful narrative; and as half of it,—we do not know which half,—is obviously only fiction, we think that we might as well have been reading Guicciardini or Professor Villari. The story of the political intrigues is necessary to determine the fate of the characters; but it is as dull as any of the ordinary history books. Machiavelli talks, but he talks like a book, and does not manage one really good bit of Mephistophelian cynicism. The great men of Florence seem to be as prosy when they are feasting as when they are playing practical jokes. One of them receives credit for “short and pithy” speech to which the “formal dignity” of his interlocutor is an amusing contrast. This short and pithy gentleman manages to take a page to say that he takes the Savonarola party to be composed of psalm-singing humbugs, not to be trusted by men of sense.

If my irreverence reveals a real defect in my author instead of myself, I think that the defect is explicable. George Eliot, I have suggested, was a woman; a woman, too, of rather delicate health, exhausted by hard work; and, moreover, a woman who, in spite of her philosophy, was eminently respectable, and brought up in a quiet middle-class atmosphere. “To bring in a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing,” we know, “and there is not a more fearful wildfowl than your lion living.” Benvenuto Cellini would certainly have been “a fearful wildfowl” in St. John’s Wood; and though by dint of conscientious reading George Eliot knew a great deal about the ruffian geniuses of the Renaissance, she could not throw herself into any real sympathy with



them. Such a feat required the audacity of a Victor Hugo and, perhaps, the indifference to propriety of a modern realist. The criticism would be summed up by calling the book "academic"; meaning, I take it, that it suggests the professor's chair; and implies the belief that a careful study of authorities, and scrupulous attention to æsthetic canons, will be a sufficient outfit for a journey into the regions of romance. George Eliot was not blind to such considerations; and George Lewes, in his capacity of critic, could put them very keenly in writing of other people. His enthusiastic admiration for George Eliot perhaps obscured to him what he would have been the first to see elsewhere; and, anyhow, he encouraged her tendencies to a questionable direction of her genius.

Yet I do not deny that there was much to be said for the judgment of the contemporary critics who held that *Romola* would be one of the permanent masterpieces of English literature. Before I can adjust my own impressions to theirs, I must be allowed to remove from my mind any lingering impression that *Romola* and Tito lived at Florence in the fifteenth century. They were only masquerading there, and getting the necessary "properties" from the history-shops at which such things are provided for the diligent student. *Romola* was, I take it, a cousin of Maggie Tulliver, though of loftier character, and provided with a thorough classical culture. The religious crisis through which she had to pass was not due to Savonarola, but to modern controversies. The antagonistic principles which were in conflict in the Renaissance period are still in existence, though they have entered into different combinations, and are

tested by different issues. There are still Machiavel-  
lians, I believe, in politics, and Epicureans in art and  
morals, and the tender soul still finds something of the  
charm in the Catholic ideal of life which appealed to  
Romola through Savonarola. If, therefore, we venture  
to drop the history, or to consider it as a mere con-  
ventional background, we can still be interested in the  
real subject of the book, the ordeal through which  
• Romola has to pass, and the tragedy of a high feminine  
nature exposed to such doubts and conflicting impulses  
as may still present themselves in different shapes. I  
could wish, indeed, that there were a good deal less  
history, or that it had been handled with more audacity.  
But for all that, Romola and her immediate surroundings  
make a very impressive group, which may affect us like  
some masterpiece in which a painter has made use of  
conventional and unreal accessories. The central idea,  
or, if we choose to say so, the "moral" of the book,  
is clearly indicated. The pressing problem for Romola,  
we are told, when she comes under the influence of  
Savonarola, is not to settle questions of controversy,  
but "to keep alive that flame of unselfish emotion by  
which a life of sadness might well be a life of active  
love." She is so moved by the "grand energies" of  
the prophet's nature that she can listen patiently even  
to his prophecies. She is profoundly impressed in the  
scene in which he comes nearest to being a living  
person; and tells her that to run away from her husband  
is really to be self-willed and moved by selfish purposes.  
She is to "make her marriage-sorrows an offering"  
and to live for Florence, where she has been placed by  
God, who addresses her through her teacher. The  
light abandonment of ties because they have ceased

to be pleasant is "the uprooting of social and personal virtue." Her marriage has ceased to be for her the "mystic union which is its own guarantee of indissolubleness"; and there is no compensation "for the woman who feels that the chief relation of her life has been no more than a mistake." She has lost her crown. The deepest secret of human blessedness has half whispered itself "to her and then for ever passed away." She accepts the position till presently even Savonarola ceases to command her confidence. She finds that he can hoodwink his conscience for the benefit of his sect. "No one who has ever known what it is to lose faith in a fellow-man whom he has profoundly loved and revered will lightly say that the shock can leave the faith in an Invisible Goodness unshaken." Romola despairs of finding any consistent duty. "What force was there to create for her that supremely hallowed motive which men call duty, but which can have no inward constraining existence save through some form of constraining love?" The solution, so far as there is one, comes in a form which one cannot altogether admire. Poor Romola, in her despair, gets into a miscellaneous boat lying ashore; and the boat drifts away in a manner rarely practised by boats in real life, and spontaneously lands her in a place where everybody is dying of the plague, and she can therefore make herself useful to her fellow-creatures. She clearly ought to have been drowned, like Maggie, and we feel that Providence is made to interfere rather awkwardly. Perhaps, too, Romola's sentiments show rather too clearly that she has been prematurely impressed by the Positivist "religion of humanity." But a fine nature torn by conflicting duties and ideals, and

endeavouring to find some worthy conciliation, presents an admirable theme, and often enables George Eliot to show her highest powers of delineation. Readers in general cannot feel quite so warmly to *Romola* as to the childish Maggie; she is a little too hard and statuesque, and drops her husband rather too coolly and decisively as soon as she finds out that he is capable of disregarding her sentiments. Still she is one of the few figures who occupy a permanent and peculiar niche in the great gallery of fiction; and if she is a trifle chilly and over-dignified, one must admit that she is not the less lifelike. She is, moreover, the only one—to my feeling—of George Eliot's women whose marriage has not something annoying. She marries a thorough scoundrel, it is true, but the misconception to which she falls a victim is one which we feel to be thoroughly natural under the circumstances. Her husband, Tito, is frequently mentioned as one of George Eliot's greatest triumphs. The cause of her success is, as I take it, that Tito is thoroughly and to his fingers' ends a woman. I do not intend to condemn the conception, for undoubtedly there are men whose characters are essentially feminine. Tito is of the material of which the Delilahs are made, the treacherous, caressing, sensuous creatures who involve strong men in their meshes as Tito fascinates the rather masculine *Romola*. In several of her novels George Eliot contrasts the higher feminine nature with this lower type. Dinah Morris is relieved against the "kitten-like" Hetty; Maggie against Lucy Deane; and Dorothea against Celia Brooke; and in *Romola* itself we have Tessa, who, indeed, is so much of a kitten that she approaches very nearly to be an idiot. Tito is the



kitten, or rather the panther-cub, grown to full size, and showing all the grace and malignity of his kind. He has the feminine nervousness, and "trembles like a maid at sight of spear and shield." When he catches sight of an enemy with a dagger, his face at once commends itself to a painter for the exhibition of the passion of fear. He is not cruel out of mere badness, but from effeminacy; he dislikes the sight of suffering, and would rather not inflict it where he must be a witness of it; but he can suppress the sympathy instead of the suffering, and does not mind how much his victims suffer so long as they are out of his sight. He has "a native repugnance to sights of death and pain," and would rather get rid of an enemy by exiling him than by putting him to death. But when the sentence is passed, he is comforted by reflecting upon the security which will come to him when the enemy's head is well off his shoulders. He is so thoroughly feminine that we have to be reminded that he could on occasion show "a masculine effectiveness of intellect and purpose." When he is fairly driven into a corner, that is, he can show his claws and act, for once, like a man. But his general position among his more violent associates is like that of a beautiful and treacherous woman who makes delicate caressing and ingenious equivocation do the work of the rougher and more downright masculine methods. He is most admirably adapted to impose upon his high-minded wife, who has the reluctance to admit suspicion which marks noble and simple characters, but is also apt, unfortunately, to imply a deficiency of common sense. The tragedy which follows for Romola is inevitable, and is developed

with George Eliot's full power. If we can put aside the historical paraphernalia, forget the dates and the historical Savonarola and Machiavelli, there remains a singularly powerful representation of an interesting spiritual history; of the ordeal through which a lofty nature has to pass when brought into collision with characters of baser composition; thrown into despair by the successive collapses of each of the supports to which it clings; and finding some solution in spite of its bewilderment amidst conflicting gospels, in each of which truth and falsehood are strangely mixed. There is hardly any novel, except the *Mill on the Floss*, in which the stages in the inner life of a thoughtful and tender nature are set forth with so much tenderness and sympathy. If *Romola* is far less attractive than *Maggie*, her story is more consistently developed to the end. She may remind us of another heroine who once set everybody weeping—although the histories of the two are in most respects diametrically contrasted. *Clarissa Harlowe* had very different troubles to undergo; she was too well instructed in the doctrines of the Church of England to be bothered by any religious doubts; and the respectable society in which she was brought up had no affinity to the Renaissance. The similarity is chiefly confined to the fact that both stories have a moral and a unity of interest, dependent upon a model young woman as the central figure, but there is one other resemblance: *Clarissa's* troubles, like *Romola's*, raise the question whether the moral conventions of the society in which she lives have a sanctity which should forbid the individual woman ever to defy them on behalf of her own happiness. It is curious that upon that

point George Eliot seems on the whole to agree with Richardson. Romola is perplexed by the thought that the "law is sacred," but that "rebellion may be sacred too." There are moments in life when the soul must dare to act on its own "warrant," though the punishment may be incurred if the warrant has been false. Clarissa incurs all her troubles by running away from home, and Romola by her revolt against her husband; and though Romola finally escapes with her life, she has to suffer a heavy penalty. It is only, however, upon the general point that I mean to insist. Hardly any heroine since Clarissa has been so effective a centre of interest as Romola; and if I regret that she was moved out of her own century and surrounded by a mass of irrelevant matter of antiquarian or sub-historical interest, I will not presume to quarrel with people who do not admit the incongruity.

## CHAPTER X.

FELIX HOLT.

GEORGE ELIOT had first become known as a writer (by "Amos Barton") in January 1857. When the concluding part of *Romola* appeared within six years, she had reached the first rank among her contemporaries. She had published within that time five novels of the highest excellence, and it is at least doubtful whether she was ever again to reach an equally high mark. The effort had been very great, and for the next two years she seems to have allowed her mind to lie fallow. Then she took up a new book, of which I shall have to speak presently, although nothing was published until 1866. In November 1863 the Leweses settled at the Priory, 21 North Bank, Regent's Park. This house came to be especially associated with her memory. She did not go out into society; but many people were attracted by the fame of the great authoress, and found admission to her house. Gradually she came to hold a Sunday afternoon reception, frequented by worshippers of genius and by a large circle of friends, of whom only the more intimate had the privilege of seeing her upon other days. It is needless to say that at meetings of that kind—in England at least, for we are told that in France things are better—there is often a painful sense of awkwardness. The shyness



generated by the desire to prove that your homage is genuine, and that you are so brilliant a person that it is also worth having, gives one of those painful sensations which is not least among the minor miseries of life. It may, I think, be said that the evil was reduced to a minimum on those occasions at the Priory. George Lewes, in the first place, was unquenchable. He was always full of anecdote and vivacious repartee; and while more serious interviews, were taking place at the centre of the circle, there would be a little knot on the periphery which was a focus of laughter and good-humoured fun. It was a rather awful moment for the neophyte when he was presented to the quiet and dignified lady seated in her armchair, to stammer out the appropriate remarks which sometimes failed to present themselves before he had to make room for a new comer; and if the company was numerous, any general conversation was impossible. George Eliot's gentle voice was not calculated, if she had desired such a result, to hold the attention of a roomful of receptive admirers. But if rainy weather had limited the audience, and the tentative sparks of conversation had been fanned into life, she could be as charming as any admirer could desire. Her personal appearance was intellectually attractive, and had a peculiar pathetic charm. She looked fragile, overweighted perhaps by thought, and with traces of the depression of which she so often complains in her letters. Her abundant hair, auburn-brown, in later years streaked with grey, was covered by a kind of lace mantilla. She could not be called beautiful. She was said to be like Savonarola, of whose face she remarks: "It was strong-featured, and owed all its

refinement to habits of mind and rigid discipline of the body." His gaze impressed Romola because it was one "in which simple human fellowship expressed itself as a strongly-felt bond." That at least might be applied to George Eliot. Her features were strongly marked, with a rather large mouth and jaw; her eyes a grey-blue, with very variable expression; her hands were finely formed; her voice low and very musical—"a contralto," it is said, in singing; and the whole appearance expressive of a singular combination of power with intense sensibility. The best likeness is that by her friend Sir Frederick Burton, now in the National Portrait Gallery. If her talk might be at times a little too solemn for the frivolous, she could brighten into genuine playfulness, and, on occasion, into flashes of hearty scorn directed against the unlucky cynic. If the incense offered was not always of the finest quality, there was no want either of dignity or gentleness in the recipient. And nobody could watch Lewes on such occasions without being struck by the cordial and generous devotion of a man not too much given to an excess of veneration. Her belief in him was equally visible in her manner and every allusion to his work.

It is perhaps not altogether healthy for any human being to live in an atmosphere from which every unpleasant draught of chilling or bracing influence is so carefully excluded. Lewes performed the part of the censor who carefully prevents an autocrat from seeing that his flatterers are not the mouthpiece of the whole human race. "It is my rule," said George Eliot, "very strictly observed, not to read the criticisms on my writings. For years I have found this

abstinence necessary to preserve me from that discouragement as an artist which ill-judged praise no less than ill-judged blame tends to produce in me. For far worse than any verdict as to the proportion of good and evil in our work is the painful impression that we exist for a public which has no discernment of good and evil." She spoke with a contempt for the average quality of contemporary criticism which—as the critics whom we now call contemporary belong to a different generation—I might perhaps venture to approve. But it might be an interesting question for an essayist whether this rule of mental hygiene be really sound. Since the days when Pope writhed under the insults of Grub Street, sensitive authors have called upon gods and men to pity and avenge them. Their moanings seem to be rather unmanly. Which is the proper comment upon the supposed slaughter of Keats: Shelley's denunciation of the "deaf and murderous viper" who could crown

"Life's early cup with such a draught of woe":

or Byron's comment—

"'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,  
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article"?

I fancy that in these days, when authors subscribe to agencies for newspaper cuttings, the general verdict would be in favour of Byron. It would be regarded, that is, as a contemptible weakness to be thrown off one's balance by a "scathing" review. Yet, it may be asked, if one really despises, is one bound to read? It is unpleasant to be insulted even by a fool, and why expose oneself to a pain which can have no

good results? Such abnormally sensitive poets as Tennyson and Rossetti suffered cruelly from harsh criticism, and it is not clear that they gained anything from reading it. Would they not have done better if they could have adopted George Eliot's method? After all, what does a real genius ever learn from a critic? There is, it seems to me, only one good piece of advice which a critic can give to an author, namely, that the author should dare to be himself. When he proceeds to tell the author what the self really is, he is generally mistaken, and is speaking upon a topic upon which he is presumably worse informed than the person to whom he speaks. George Eliot worked upon her own theories, right or wrong; and considering the constant diffidence and depression from which she suffered, it is likely enough that a study of the critics would only have discouraged her without at all directing her into a better path. Against this, it may perhaps be urged that George Eliot's talent scarcely included the rare gift of a just appreciation of her own limitations. It is often, and, no doubt, justly said, that one of Jane Austen's especial merits is that she never let herself be distracted from the sphere in which she showed unsurpassed felicity. When she was requested to write a romance to illustrate the history of the "august house of Coburg," she judiciously declined, and indeed refrained from less palpably absurd divagations. Now George Eliot, as I shall presently have to remark, showed what most people have thought to be—if not so great a misconception, still—a conspicuously erroneous estimate of her own special peculiarities. Perhaps, though she closed her ears to "deaf and murderous vipers," she



listened with too much complacency to adoring and "genial" critics who collected her "wise, witty, and tender sayings," and took her for a great poet and philosopher as well as for a first-rate novelist. I will not affect to sum up the argument. It is only worth remarking that most novelists who have given effective portraits of human passion have lived in the world which they described, and that some characteristics of George Eliot's later work must be connected with the secluded life which circumstances and her temperament made congenial. She looked upon outside affairs from a certain distance; and though Lewes's eager interest in all manner of contemporary controversies kept her in touch with the more thoughtful minds of the day, she had little opportunity for direct familiarity with the manners and customs of society.

The year 1865 was marked by two new literary ventures, in both of which Lewes took some part. The *Pall Mall Gazette* was started at the beginning of the year, and the first number of the *Fortnightly Review*, of which Lewes was the first editor, came out in the following May. Both attracted many able writers, and the adoption of signed articles by the review introduced a novel practice in English journalism. George Eliot contributed a few articles to both, and was interested in the attempt to raise the standard of periodical writing. She was only distracted, however, for the moment from more serious work. The notes in her diary on September 6, 1864: "I am reading about Spain, and trying a drama on a subject that has fascinated me—have written the prologue, and am beginning the first act. But I have little

hope of making anything satisfactory." By the end of the year she had written three acts. On 21st February 1865 she describes herself as "ill and very miserable: George has taken my drama away from me"—the consequence, obviously, and not the cause of her misery. The drama was put aside for some time, and by the end of March she had begun her next novel, *Felix Holt*. It was finished in a little more than a year. Smith, it seems, declined to give £5000 for it—the sum presumably fixed by Lewes; but Blackwood accepted the terms, and she now returned to him for the rest of her life, though without any breach of friendship with Smith. The novel was written amid the usual fits of depression, and with the same elaborate care as its predecessors. "I finished writing," she says, "after days and nights of throbbing and palpitation—chiefly, I suppose, from a nervous excitement which I was not strong enough to support well." She had been painstaking in more ways than one. She went through the *Times* of 1832-3 at the British Museum in order to correct her childish memories of the period. She is in "a horrible fidget" about certain assumptions in the story. She wants especially to have an answer to two questions: first, whether after the Treaty of Amiens "the seizure and imprisonment of civilians was exceptional, and whether it was continued throughout the war"; and secondly, whether in 1833 a person sentenced to transportation without hard labour might be set at large on his arrival in the colony. The story again involved some complex legal relations. She began, it seems, by reading Sugden, but happily relieved herself from the need of getting up the law of real property by committing the

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problem to Mr. Frederic Harrison. The right to an estate must be suddenly transferred to a young woman; but the ordinary novelist's device of a discovery that her birth was legitimate is not applicable. The change must be effected by the death of somebody who has himself no interest in the matter; and both the actual possessor and the person to whom the right passes must be left in ignorance that the title to the estate will be affected by the death. How this is brought about may be discovered from the story itself. Mr. Harrison's law is said, as we can well believe, to be perfectly correct. Probably the average reader will be quite content to take it as correct without consulting Sugden. Meanwhile, he is rather bored by the fear that unless he clearly understands both the law and the facts, he will lose something essential to the point of the story. When one reads Wilkie Collins or Gaboriau, one is content to have a secret carefully hidden, and bits of apparent irrelevance introduced, because the chief pleasure is to consist in guessing at the connection and admiring the ingenuity with which the fragments of the puzzle are to be pieced together at the end. But in a work of such serious intention as *Felix Holt*, the mystery is felt to be teasing, and we should be more really interested if we were taken into the author's confidence at once. The genuine artist ought to be above the "long-lost heir" trick or the complicated substitutes for the old-fashioned device.

This worrying perplexity which runs through the whole partly explains the inferiority of *Felix Holt* to its predecessors. But another change is more important. We have got back from Florence of the

Renaissance to the English midlands during the Reform Bill agitation, and for that we may be thankful. But George Eliot is no longer drawing upon the old memories of Griff. She turns to account an election riot which, we are told, she had seen in her schooldays at Nuneaton; but she is thinking mainly of the Coventry time. Mrs. Poyser and her dairy have vanished, and with them the old-world charm. We have no longer the peculiar glamour which invested the former stories; the sense of looking at the little world through the harmonising atmosphere of childish memories and affections; or of becoming for the nonce denizens of a social order, narrow enough in its interests, but yet wholesome, kindly, and contented. We have some of the old-fashioned country gentry and parsons who fill the subordinate parts satisfactorily enough; but the principal interest is to be in the county-town of Treby Magna, just waking to the consciousness of the great political movement outside, and with little enough that was romantic about its lawyers, tradesmen, or manufacturers. Canals and coal-mines and a saline spring are beginning to rouse it from its "old-fashioned, grazing, brewing, wool-packing, cheese-loading life"; and the change only seems to reveal thoroughly prosaic, not to say vulgar and stupefying characteristics. There is no suggestion of any lingering fondness for an order which is essentially mean as well as obsolete. Naturally, therefore, we are expected to sympathise with Felix Holt the Radical, who is trying to stir up this stagnant pool.

George Eliot, in fact, is now occupied with the problem which is already suggested by her previous works. She had strong conservative tendencies, and

a dislike for violent and onesided reforms. Hitherto she had emphasised her sympathy for the higher purposes and aspirations which were hidden under the commonplace and even superstitious modes of life and thought. But, after all, she is also fully convinced that intellectual progress and a larger culture are essential and important; and her tenderness for the past must not be allowed to sanction reactionary tendencies. Romola has already been troubled by the problem in one phase, and it is now to be presented to us in various shapes. Young men or women, troubled with active intellects, have to rouse from their comfortable slumbers and to provide themselves with an ideal; they will become missionaries of a new creed, and have the usual difficulties of the position. If they quarrel with the past too contemptuously, they may become mere visionary fanatics; and if too much inclined to compromise, they may sacrifice their aspirations and yield to the benumbing influence of respectability. The ordinary novelist is content with telling us how a young couple contrive to come together without bothering themselves at all about the Universe or their relation to the general progress of humanity. George Eliot, though her interests in philosophical questions may be a little too intrusive, may still deserve gratitude for introducing a new motive, and showing us the fate of young people affected by the unusual weakness of preoccupation with ideals.

Felix Holt represents an experiment upon this theme. He is an admirable but, I fear it must be admitted, a far from satisfactory representative of his breed. He is a radical of the days of 1832; and George Eliot, as we have seen, had been refreshing her

memories of that period by reading the old newspapers, and had been surprised by the strength of the language about "bloated pluralists" and so forth. We should naturally have expected that the eloquence of Felix Holt would have reflected the same sentiment. He is a working man, and had managed to be a student at Glasgow, where there was plenty of good fiery radicalism; and, in fact, he starts with a hearty contempt for the upper classes, and thinks a Whig no better than a Tory in disguise. Such a man might swear by Cobbett or by Owen, and would probably take his religious views from Paine's *Age of Reason*. He would be of the stuff of which the Chartists were soon to be made; would believe that the millennium was to be introduced by the famous six points; and would certainly favour the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords and the confiscation of Church property. George Eliot might have shown us how such doctrines were a natural, though it might be, a too precipitate outcome of really philanthropic and generous feelings in a man of the day. Ebenezer Elliott, the "Tyrtaeus" of the Anti-Corn Law movement, and Thomas Cooper, the Chartist poet, were men in Felix Holt's position, who shared his vehemence and came to be alienated from the violent section of their allies. Felix Holt, however, has to be a model young man, and therefore he sees from the first the errors of contemporary zealots. When a self-styled radical orator addresses a public meeting and demands "universal suffrage," and the other points of the Charter, Felix appeals to reason. Systems of suffrage and the rest, he tells the mob, are engines: the force that is to work them must come from men's



passions. No scheme will do good, therefore, unless the power behind it takes a right direction. The "steam that is to work the engines" is public opinion, that is, "the ruling belief in society about what is right and what is wrong, what is honourable and what is shameful." Nothing, therefore, is to be expected from a party which sanctions bribery and corruption. When Felix makes a personal application of this lofty doctrine by pointing out that the agent of his own party is an embodiment of corruption, he naturally produces loud cheers; but the doctrine itself, however philosophical, would hardly have pleased his audience. Soon after the appearance of the novel George Eliot published in *Blackwood* "An Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt," which enforces the same moral. It may be, as I believe myself, that her principle is a very sound one. Still one perceives that it is a principle which will be much more easily accepted by readers of *Blackwood's Magazine* than by the "working man" to whom it is ostensibly addressed. He will only see that it is a highly convenient argument for putting off all reform. With that, however, I am not concerned. The effect in the novel is to take the sting out of the hero. He is too reasonable for his part. He is introduced as a red-hot radical, and shows it by extreme rudeness to Esther, whom he suspects of fine-ladyism. Esther, being an admirable young woman, comes to see that he is right, and even that there is something complimentary in his exasperation against her. I should have liked him better if he had been exasperated to rudeness against his political enemies, and shown his sound judgment by gentle treatment of the trifling petulance of a pretty girl.

No doubt, Felix is an honourable man, for he refuses to live upon a quack medicine or to look leniently at bribery when it is on his own side. But there is a painful excess of sound judgment about him. He gets into prison, not for leading a mob, but for trying to divert them from plunder by actions which are misunderstood. He is very inferior to Alton Locke, who gets into prison for a similar performance. The impetuosity and vehemence only comes out in his rudeness to Esther and plain speaking to her adopted father; and in trying to make him an ideal of wisdom, George Eliot only succeeds in making him unfit for his part.

If, therefore, we are to accept the indication given by the title, and suppose that Felix Holt is to be the focus of interest, the novel, I think, fails of its effect. We no more see the rough, thorough-going radical, stung to fury by pauperism and the slavery of children in factories, and sharing the zeal and the illusions of Jacobins, than we saw the true spirit of the Renaissance in *Romola*. Mr. Felix Holt would have been quite in his place at Toynbee Hall; but is much too cold-blooded for the time when revolution and confiscation were really in the air. Perhaps this indicates the want of masculine fibre in George Eliot and the deficient sympathy with rough popular passions which makes us feel that he represents the afterthought of the judicious sociologist and not the man of flesh and blood who was the product of the actual conditions. Anyhow, the novel appears to be regarded as her least interesting. There are undoubtedly many charming scenes. One would be disposed to think that Rufus Lyon, the old dissenting minister, was more of a contemporary of

Baxter than could have been possible at the time; but one cannot say confidently what survivals of the type there may have been at Coventry, and his simplicity and pedantry and power of emphasising the highest elements in the creed of his sect show the art of a skilled humorist. Esther, too, with her naïve appreciation of the charms of a luxurious life, is too good for Felix. But the really strongest part of the novel is old Mrs. Transome, brooding over her sorrows, and dwelling remorsefully upon her error in the past. "If she had only been more haggard and less majestic, those who had glimpses of her outward life might have said that she was a griping harridan with a tongue like a razor. No one said exactly that; but they never said anything like the full truth about her, or divined what was hidden under her outward life—a woman's keen sensibility and dread, which lay screened behind all her petty habits and narrow notions as some quivering thing with eyes and throbbing heart may lie crouching behind withered rubbish. The sensibility and dread had palpitated all the faster in the prospect of her son's return; and now that she had seen him, she said to herself in her bitter way, 'It is a lucky cub that escapes skinning. The best happiness I shall ever know will be to escape the worst misery.'" That is one of the striking passages in which George Eliot shows her vivid insight into certain moods and characters. — Mrs. Transome, I confess, interests me so much that I should have liked to know a little more about that early intrigue which has soured her, and how she came to be fascinated by the old lover, who by the time at which the book opens has shown his inferior nature and uses the old memories

to insult her. I could willingly have spared, in order to make room for a little more of the family scandal, some of the elaborate legal complications, and of Mr. Felix Holt's clumsy performances as a prophet of social reform.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SPANISH GYPSY.

*FELIX HOLT*, as we have seen, had been taken up at a time when she was in despair of finishing a drama, which Lewes for once did not altogether approve. She had written three or four acts, and on reading the old work again "found it impossible to abandon it." The conceptions moved her deeply, and had "never been wrought out before." Still it required entire recasting. Some of her views at the time are given in an interesting letter to Mr. Frederic Harrison (15th August 1866). He had, it seems, proposed some theme for her consideration. "That," she says, "is a tremendously difficult problem which you have laid before me; and I think you see its difficulties, though they can hardly press on you as they do on me, who have gone through again and again the severe effort of trying to make certain ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they had revealed themselves to me just in the flesh, and not in the spirit. I think æsthetic teaching is the highest of all teaching, because it deals with life in its highest complexity; but if it ceases to be purely æsthetic, if it lapses anywhere from the picture to the diagram, it becomes the most offensive of all teaching." She proceeds to point out the "agonising labour to an English-fed imagination to make out a sufficiently real

background for the desired picture—to get breathing individual forms and group them in the needful relations, so that the presentation will lay hold on the emotions as human experience—will, as you say, ‘flash’ conviction on the world by means of aroused sympathy.” She recalls the “unspeakable pains” involved in the preparation of *Romola* and the acquisition of the necessary Italian “idiom.” The problem suggested by Mr. Harrison—its precise nature is not told—would, she thinks, be one of “tenfold arduousness.” The statement shows George Eliot’s perception of the real difficulty. “Ideas” may be seen “in the flesh” or “in the spirit”: that is, I take it, as the abstract formulæ of philosophy or as the concrete visions of poetry. The question is whether the writer who starts from the abstract can by industrious study so incarnate his ideas that they may be as vivid and real as if he had started from the opposite point of view. “Enough!” one is induced to say, as Rasselas says to Imlac, “thou hast convinced me that no human being” (and no philosopher) “can ever be a poet.” No deliberate absorption of imagery can ever make up for the direct spontaneous intuition, and a task which involves “agonising labour” is likely enough to result in painful reading. Why undertake it?

George Eliot, however, thought differently, and attempted to achieve this difficult task in the *Spanish Gypsy*. She is soon “swimming in Spanish history and literature,” and on 15th October 1866 begins the recasting. Early in 1867 she visited Spain to get up the local colouring, and after many changes the poem was at last finished on 29th April 1868. Lewes was in an “unprecedented state of delight,” and especially

pleased with the "variety" of the work, because he had persuaded her to put it aside "on the ground of monotony." The book, though the sale was considerable, roused some hostile criticism at the time, and has not convinced even her warmest admirers that she was in her proper place as a poet. She left a note upon its history which is interesting, as giving her own defence against the obvious reasons for dissatisfaction, and as illustrating her general position. The subject, it seems, was originally suggested by a picture of the Annunciation, ascribed to Titian in the Scuola di san Rocco at Venice. It embodied, she thought, a "great dramatic motive." A maiden, "full of young hope," and about to share in the ordinary lot of womanhood, is suddenly made aware that she is to fulfil a great destiny, and to have a terribly different experience. "Here," she thought, "is a subject grander than that of Iphigenia, and it has never been used." She then tried to find an appropriate embodiment, and could think of nothing except the moment of Spanish history when the struggle with the Moors was attaining its climax. She could not make use of Moors and Jews, because the "facts of their history were too conspicuously opposed to the working out of my catastrophe." Facts have that awkward habit. She thought, however (though the point is surely doubtful), that this objection did not apply to the Gypsies. The subject, as she meditated, became "more and more pregnant." It might be "a symbol of the part which is played by hereditary conditions in the largest sense, and of the fact that what we call duty is entirely made up of such conditions." Tragedy consists in the "terrible difficulty of adjust-

ing our individual needs to the dire necessity of our lot," in which, of course, the lives of our fellow-creatures are involved. The great Greek tragedies often turn upon such a conflict between the inherited Nemesis and the individual whom it crushes. *Othello* becomes a "most pathetic tragedy" instead of a simple story of jealousy, on account "of the hereditary conditions of *Othello's* lot"—a point surely not much considered by Shakespeare. We may grant, however, that a tragedy may thus show the individual giving way to the general. It cannot explain why the conflict should arise, but it sets forth the pathetic consequences. In the *Spanish Gypsy* the action represents the loving and sympathetic instincts which are converted into "piety, *i.e.* loving, willing submission and heroic Promethean effort towards high possibilities." Certain remarks upon ethical doctrines are apparently meant to show that such instincts cannot be governed by "rational reflection," and therefore may at once arouse sympathy and lead to terrible scrapes. There are, however, two "consolatory elements" woven into the very warp of the poem: "(1) The importance of individual deeds; (2) the all-sufficiency of the soul's passions in determining sympathetic action." I mention these elements, as George Eliot attaches so much importance to them, though I confess that they do not much console me. One other remark is noteworthy. It might, she says, be "a reasonable ground of objection against the whole structure of the *Spanish Gypsy* if it were shown that the action is outrageously impossible—lying outside all that can be congruously conceived of human actions. It is *not* a reasonable ground of objection



that they would have done better to act otherwise, any more than it is a reasonable objection against the *Iphigenia* that Agamemnon would have done better not to sacrifice his daughter."

It is plain that if the *Spanish Gypsy* failed to succeed, it was not for want of careful consideration of æsthetic principles. Moreover, without following this excursion into theories, we may, I think, take one result for granted. Undoubtedly, the conflict between "the individual" and "the general," or, say, between the duties which a human being owes to his own friends and family, and those which he owes to his country or his gods, may be an admirable theme for tragedy. Fedalma, George Eliot's heroine, is distracted between her love for her destined bridegroom and her sense of duty to the race from which she sprang. Nobody will deny that such a struggle presents an interesting and worthy theme. The difficulty comes afterwards. Why did George Eliot suppose that the only fitting historical embodiment was at "a particular period of Spanish history"? This seems to involve a singular leap in the logic. It is especially noticeable in a writer who has insisted that the highest motives may be found under commonplace outsides; that country parsons and farmers may have the "root of the matter" in them; and that even the passions which inspired the Greek tragedies may be shown at work in the breast of an eight years' old girl. "Heredity" has been annexed of late years by "realistic" novelists; but, in any case, the struggle between loyalty to our race or family instincts, and the wider forces of evolution, might be illustrated from transactions less obscure than the struggle in the Spain of the fifteenth

century. A hopeful young English maiden of the nineteenth may be called upon to choose between making a respectable marriage and devoting herself to some impracticable ideal with tragical, if perhaps also comic, results. Why place the heroine among conditions so hard to imagine?

One consequence of George Eliot's choice of this romantic setting for her characters is obvious. In romance we have to take leave of common sense. That is an easy sacrifice to make on some occasions. Children, even grown-up children, may delight in fairy tales and the Arabian Nights, though they get into a region where the impossible is the order of the day and morality ceases to be binding. Poetically-minded people can still take some pleasure, I believe, in the old romances, and find in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* not only a delightful series of pictures, but poetry informed with a lofty spirit of chivalry. But in the *Spanish Gypsy* we cannot get so far from downright historical fact. Our ethical sentiment is to be seriously interested, and conviction is to be "flashed" upon us by aroused sympathy. Now, to sympathise to any purpose, we must understand. We must be able to appreciate the difficulty of the position and the severity of the ordeal. Here, however, we are terribly at a loss. The critical scene of the *Spanish Gypsy* is the first interview between Fedalma and Zarca. Fedalma has been brought up from her earliest infancy as a Catholic and a Spaniard. She has only seen the gypsies as a band of prisoners brought through the town in chains. She is on the eve of marriage to a typical Spanish noble, with whom she is passionately in love. To her enters abruptly one of the gypsies. He explains without loss

of time that he is her father ; that he is about to be the Moses or Mahomet of a gypsy nation in Africa ; and orders her to give up her country, her religion, and her lover to join him in this hopeful enterprise. She is, of course, a good deal put out, and explains some obvious objections ; but after exchanging some paragraphs of blank verse, she walks off with her parent, leaving a short note to inform her lover that she can have nothing more to do with him. Admit the least touch of common sense, and the situation is surely, in George Eliot's words, "outrageously impossible." We know enough of the gypsies of history to perceive that Zarca behaved like a lunatic. We may try to escape by dropping history and regarding "Spain," like Shakespeare's Bohemia, as a phrase belonging to the geography of simple romance. But, then, the whole story becomes too unreal to appeal to our sympathies. We are able to accept the position of Iphigenia, to which George Eliot appeals, as treated by Euripides, or even by Racine, and for the moment take for granted that the human sacrifice is a reasonable mode of conduct. That assumption once made, the position becomes clear. The father is bound to kill the daughter, because, as we know, the gods will be pleased. But the difficulty of the Spanish Gypsy is that if we try, as George Eliot tried, to imagine the actual state of things, the dilemma is absurd ; and if we substitute a world of pure fancy, everything becomes arbitrary. We do not see why the daughter is bound to act like a lunatic. She informs us, of course, that she is deeply affected, but we cannot perceive that her motives are reasonable and intelligible. Considered from the ethical side,

the objection seems to be fatal. Dr. Congreve, an adequate authority, said that it was a "mass of positivism." The meaning, if an outsider may venture a guess, seems to be that the positivist insists upon a view of duty as corresponding to the vital instincts of the "social organism"; the identification of the individual with the body of which he is the product, and the constituent and consequent readiness to sacrifice life and happiness to the interest of the community into which he is born. This doctrine was already preached, though in an imperfect form, by Savonarola to Romola, and becomes prominent in the *Spanish Gypsy*. Now one may accept the principle as true and valuable, and yet regard the story as a *reductio ad absurdum* of some applications. Fedalma, in her first interview with Zarca, exclaims—

"Father, my soul is not too base to ring  
At touch of your great thoughts; nay, in my blood  
There streams the sense unspeakable of kind,  
As leopard feels at ease with leopard."

The human being should have higher instincts than the leopard. Fedalma, however, is gradually led to admit the supreme force of this appeal. She will not be "half-hearted."

"I will seek nothing but to shun base joy.  
The saints were cowards who stood by to see  
Christ crucified: they should have flung themselves  
Upon the Roman spears, and died in vain—  
The grandest death, to die in vain—for love,  
Greater than sways the forces of the world!  
That death shall be my bridegroom. I will wed  
The curse that blights my people."

Of course, the young lady is excited. She is in the state of mind in which irrationality is a recommenda-



tion. Death surely is made grand by the grandeur of the purpose, not by the futility of the means. Surely the death of the early Christians and their master would not be grander if we held that their zeal was wasted on an ideal as absurd as Fedalma's. Her doctrine, stated in cold blood, seems to be that our principles are to be determined by the physical fact of ancestry. The discovery that my father was a Saxon or a Celt might perhaps be allowed to affect my sympathies, but surely should not change my views of home-rule. In an interval of common sense Fedalma suggests that she will marry and persuade her husband to protect the gypsies. Nobody could object to that; but to throw overboard all other ties on the simple ground of descent, and adopt the most preposterous schemes of the vagabonds to whom you are related, seems to be very bad morality whatever may be its affinity to positivism.

The error seems to be precisely that George Eliot was hopelessly trammelled by the conditions which she had accepted. She could not get her abstract principle to become "incarnate" in facts. She falls into a hopeless entanglement. The facts become absurd, and the principle has to be distorted. It may still be asked whether, in spite of such views, the *Spanish Gypsy* is not a great poem. *Paradise Lost* is a masterpiece poetically, though its theology is grotesque and its proposed justification of Providence an admitted failure. Can we say anything of the kind on behalf of the *Spanish Gypsy*? It may clearly be said that it certainly shows a powerful intellect stored with noble sentiment and impelled to utter great thoughts. It illustrates curiously the union observed by Lewes of

great diffidence with great ambition. She aims at the highest mark, though at any given moment she is despondent of achievement. She adopted the title of the poem, she says, because it recalled the old dramatists, with whom she thought she had "more cousinship than with recent poets."<sup>1</sup> It seems to have been first written in the dramatic form; though, as finished, it became a set of scenes interspersed with digressions into epic poetry. The passages which would be represented in the regular drama by stage directions are expanded into descriptive writing or into psychological disquisitions intended to introduce us to the characters. The old dramatists, to whom she refers, might give a precedent for introducing a good many sententious remarks upon human life which have no very direct relation to the story; but, in truth, she reminds us rather of "Philip van Artevelde" and other modern plays not intended for the stage; and if we complain that the book tried by dramatic tests becomes languid, it may be replied that we have had fair notice that it belongs to a different genus and should be judged from the author's point of view. This, however, does not answer the ordinary objection that, after all, it is not poetry; or does not decisively cross the indefinable but essential line which divides true poetry from the highest rhetoric. Here and there is a fine phrase, as in the opening passage about—

"Broad-breasted Spain, leaning with equal love  
On the Mid Sea that moans with memories,  
And on the untraveller Ocean's restless tides."

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<sup>1</sup> Middleton's *Spanish Gipsie* was acted about 1621.

Or a few lines later—

“What times are little? To the sentinel  
That hour is regal when he mounts on guard.”

Passages often sound exactly like poetry; and yet, even her admirers admit that they seldom, if ever, have the genuine ring. They do not satisfy the old criterion that nothing can be poetry, in the full sense, of which we are disposed to say that it would be as good in prose. The lyrics which are interspersed are palpable if clever imitations of the genuine thing. Perhaps it was simply that George Eliot had not one essential gift—the exquisite sense for the value of words which may transmute even common thought into poetry. Even her prose, indeed, though often admirable, sometimes becomes heavy, and gives the impression that instead of finding the right word she is accumulating more or less complicated approximations. Then one might inquire whether, after all, the problem of “incarnating” the abstract idea, if not really impracticable from the beginning, was suited to her powers. The dramatic form especially demands the intuitive instead of the discursive attitude of mind, and the vivid “presentation” of concrete men and women instead of the thoughtful analysis of their character. Might she not succeed by accepting the conditions frankly, and attempting, in spite of its bad name, an avowedly “philosophical form”? She loved Wordsworth well enough to forgive his admitted shortcomings; and if the *Excursion* is undeniably dull, it is still a work which, in spite of all critical condemnations, has profoundly impressed the spiritual development of many eminent persons.

George Eliot was in fact led to try various poetical experiments. A volume of poems published in 1874 contained the "Legend of Jubal," begun in 1869, "How Lisa loved the King" (from Boccaccio), "Agatha," "Armgart," and "A College Breakfast Party," which were written in the same period. That they all show great literary ability is undeniable, though it is still doubtful whether they show more. The "College Breakfast," with its downright plunge into metaphysics, set forth with an abundant display of metaphor and illustration, is a singular exhibition of (as I must think) misapplied ingenuity; and chiefly interesting to people who may wish to know George Eliot's judgment of Hegelianism, æstheticism, and positivism. The most remarkable, however, is the short poem called "O may I join the choir invisible." It has been accepted by many who sympathise with her religious views. The invisible choir is formed of those "immortal dead who live again in minds made better by their presence." So to live, we are told, "is heaven." The generous natures have set their example before us, and our "rarer, better, truer self" finds in them a help to harmonise discordant impulses, and seek a loftier ideal.

"The better self shall live till human Time  
Shall fold its eyelids, and the human sky  
Be gathered like a scroll within the tomb  
Unread for ever.

This is life to come  
Which martyred men have made more glorious  
For us who strive to follow. May I reach  
That purest heaven, be to other souls  
The cup of strength in some great agony,



Enkindle generous ardour, feed pure love,  
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty—  
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,  
And in diffusion ever more intense.  
So shall I join the choir invisible  
Whose music is the gladness of the world."

To appreciate the sacred poetry of any church, one ought to be an orthodox member; and, to many people, of course, immortality thus understood seems to be rather a mockery. It would be better, they think, to admit frankly that immortality is a figment. Even they may agree that the aspiration is lofty and eloquently expressed. Reflections upon a similar theme inspire two other poems. Armgart is a *prima donna*, rejoicing in the overpowering success of her first appearance, who suddenly loses her voice by a sudden attack of throat disease; and has to reconcile herself to the abandonment of her hopes, and to becoming part of the choir inaudible. "Jubal"—which seems to me to be the nearest approach to genuine poetry—is the story of the patriarch who invented music. He leaves his tribe for a journey which, as he has the prediluvian longevity, is protracted for an indefinite time, and when he returns finds that people have got out of the habit of living for centuries. The descendants of his contemporaries are celebrating a feast in honour of the inventor of music; and, when he innocently observes that he is the person in question, he is pooh-poohed without further inquiry. As he lies down to die his Past appears to him, and explains that he should be content with having bestowed the great gift upon mankind.

"Thy limbs shall lie dark, tombless on the sod,  
Because thou shinest in man's soul, a God,  
Who found and gave new passion and new joy  
That nought but earth's destruction can destroy."

The excellent R. H. Hutton was offended by the doctrine of this poem, especially by the apparent implication that death is, on the whole, a good thing, because it induced a race, which had taken things too easily as long as they fancied that they had an indefinite time before them, to rouse themselves and invent musical as well as other instruments. The logic indeed—if really intended—does not appear to be very cogent. The moral that, as we have got to die, we should be content with the consciousness of having played our part, without expecting reward or bothering ourselves about posthumous fame, is more to the purpose. Jubal, who happily lived in a purely legendary region, does not come into conflict with historical facts like Fedalma, and may be taken as a satisfactory poetical symbol of a characteristic mood, suggested by the old thought of mortality and oblivion. I cannot, indeed, believe that George Eliot achieved a permanent position in English poetry: she is a remarkable, I suppose unique, case, of a writer taking to poetry at the ripe age of forty-four, by which the majority of poets have done their best work. Perhaps that suggests that the impulse was acquired rather than innate, and more likely to succeed in impressing reflective and melancholy minds than in vivid presentation of concrete images.

## CHAPTER XII.

### MIDDLEMARCH.

THE poetic impulse seems to have decayed soon after the *Spanish Gypsy*, as George Eliot gradually became absorbed in another novel. On 1st January 1869 she notes that she has projected a novel, to be called *Middlemarch*, besides a "long poem on Timoleon," of which we hear nothing more. *Middlemarch* at first made slow progress. She began the "Vincy and Featherstone parts" in August. It is not till December 1870 that she is beginning a story to be called "Miss Brooke," without any very serious intention "of carrying it out lengthily." It became amalgamated with the other story. George Eliot appears to have suffered even more than usual from ill-health and despondency during the composition, and was troubled at times by the difficulty of bringing a superabundant variety of motives into artistic unity. The book was published on a new plan, coming out in eight parts—the first on 1st December 1871, and the last in December 1872. *Middlemarch*, she says, was received with as much enthusiasm as any of her former books, not even excepting *Adam Bede*. Its commercial success is proved by the fact that she made more by it than by *Romola*. Nearly 25,000 copies had been sold before the end of 1875. George Eliot was now admittedly the first living

novelist. Thackeray and Dickens were both dead, and no survivor of her generation could be counted as a rival. When a writer's fame is once established, the reception of his books is apt to be disproportionately favourable. They are read not only by genuine admirers, but by all who know that they ought to admire. The immediate success of *Middlemarch* may have been proportioned rather to the author's reputation than to its intrinsic merits. It certainly lacks the peculiar charm of the early work, and one understands why the *Spectator* should have been led to say that George Eliot was "the most melancholy of authors." The conclusion was apparently softened to meet this objection. There is not much downright tragedy, but the general impression is unmistakably sad. This, however, does not prevent *Middlemarch* from having, in some ways, even a stronger interest than its companions. George Eliot was now over fifty, and the book represents the general tone of her reflection upon life and human nature. By that age most people have had some rather unpleasant aspects of life pretty strongly forced upon their attention; and George Eliot, though she made it a principle to take things cheerfully, had never had much of the buoyancy which generates optimism. She was not, she used to say, either an optimist or a pessimist, but a "meliorist"—a believer that the world could be improved, and was perhaps slowly improving, though with a very strong conviction that the obstacles were enormous and the immediate outlook not specially bright. Some people, it seems, attributed her sadness to her creed, though I fancy that, in such matters, creed has much less to do with the matter than temperament. So sensitive a



woman, working so conscientiously and with so many misgivings, could hardly make her imaginary world a cheerful place of residence. *Middlemarch* is primarily a portrait of the circles which had been most familiar to her in youth, and its second title is "a study of provincial life." Provincial life, however, is to exemplify the results of a wider survey of contemporary society. One peculiarity of the book is appropriate to this scheme. It is not a story, but a combination of at least three stories—the love affairs of Dorothea and Casaubon, of Rosamond Vincy and Lydgate, and of Mary Garth and Fred Vincy, which again are interwoven with the story of Bulstrode. The various actions get mixed together as they would naturally do in a country town. Modern English novelists seem to have made up their mind that this kind of mixture is contrary to the rules of art. I am content to say that I used to find some old novels written on that plan very interesting. It is tiresome, of course, if a reader is to think only of the development of the plot. But when the purpose is to get a general picture of the manners and customs of a certain social stratum, and we are to be interested in all the complex play of character and the opinions of neighbours, the method is appropriate to the design. The individuals are shown as involved in the network of surrounding interests which affects their development. *Middlemarch* gives us George Eliot's most characteristic view of such matters. It is her answer to the question, What on the whole is your judgment of commonplace English life? for "provincialism" is not really confined to the provinces. Without trying to put the answer into a single formula, and it would be very unjust to

her to assume that such a formula was intended, I may note one leading doctrine:—

“An eminent philosopher among my friends,” she says, with a characteristically scientific illustration, “who can dignify even your ugly furniture by lifting it into the serene light of science, has shown me this pregnant little fact. Your pier-glass, an extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling into an exclusive optical selection. These things are a parable”—showing the effect of egoism. It may also represent the effect of a novelist’s mental preoccupation. Many different views of human society may be equally true to fact; but the writer, who has a particular “candle,” in the shape of a favourite principle, produces a spontaneous unity by its application to the varying cases presented. The personages who carry out the various plots of *Middlemarch* may be, as I think they are, very lifelike portraits of real life, but they are seen from a particular point of view. The “prelude” gives the keynote. We are asked to remember the childish adventure of Saint Theresa setting out to seek martyrdom in the country of the Moors. Her “passionate, ideal nature demanded an epic life . . . some object which would reconcile self-despair with the rapturous consciousness of life

beyond self. . . . She ultimately found her epos in the reform of a religious order." There are later-born Theresas, who had "no epic life with a constant unfolding of far-resonant action." They have had to work amid "dim lights and tangled circumstances"; they have been "helped by no coherent social faith and ardour which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently thrilling soul." They have blundered accordingly; but "here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off, and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centering on some long recognisable deed." We are to see how such a nature manifests itself—no longer in the remote regions of arbitrary fancy, but in the commonplace atmosphere of a modern English town. In Maggie Tulliver and in Felix Holt we have already had the struggle for an ideal; but in *Middlemarch* there is a fuller picture of the element of stupidity and insensibility which is apt to clog the wings of aspiration. The Dodsons, among whom Maggie is placed, belong to the stratum of sheer bovine indifference. They are not only without ideas, but it has never occurred to them that such things exist. In *Middlemarch* we consider the higher stratum, which reads newspapers and supports the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and whose notions constitute what is called enlightened public opinion. The typical representative of what it calls its mind is Mr. Brooke, who can talk about Sir Humphry Davy, and Wordsworth, and Italian art, and has a delightful facility in handling the small change of conversation which has ceased to possess

any intrinsic value. Even his neighbours can see that he is a fatuous humbug, and do not care to veil their blunt commonsense by fine phrases. But he discharges the functions of the Greek chorus with a boundless supply of the platitudes which represent an indistinct foreboding of the existence of an intellectual world.

Dorothea, brought up with Mr. Brooke in place of a parent, is to be a Theresa struggling under "dim lights and entangled circumstances." She is related, of course, both to Maggie and to Romola, though she is not in danger of absolute asphyxiation in a dense bucolic atmosphere, or of martyrdom in the violent struggles of hostile creeds. Her danger is rather that of being too easily acclimatised in a comfortable state of things, where there is sufficient cultivation and no particular demand for St. Therasas. She attracts us by her perfect straightforwardness and simplicity, though we are afraid that she has even a slight touch of stupidity. We fancy that she might find satisfaction, like other young ladies, in looking after schools and the unhealthy cottages on her uncle's estate. Still, she has a real loftiness of character, and a disposition to take things seriously, which make her more or less sensible of the limitations of her circle. She has vague religious aspirations, looks down upon the excellent country gentleman, Sir James Chettam, and fancies that she would like to marry the judicious Hooker, or Milton in his blindness. We can understand, and even pardon her, when she takes the pedant Casaubon at his own valuation, and sees in him "a living Bossuet, whose work would reconcile complete knowledge with devoted piety, a modern Augustine who united the glories of doctor and saint."



Dorothea's misguided adoration is, I think, very natural, but it is undeniably painful, and many readers protested. The point is curious. George Eliot declared that she had lived in much sympathy with Casaubon's life, and was especially gratified when some one saw the pathos of his career. No doubt there is a pathos in devotion to an entirely mistaken ideal. To spend a life in researches, all thrown away from ignorance of what has been done, is a melancholy fate. One secret of Casaubon's blunder was explained to his wife during the honeymoon. He had not—as Ladislaw pointed out—read the Germans, and was therefore groping through a wood with a pocket compass where they had made carriage roads. But suppose that he had read the last authorities? Would that have really mended matters? A deeper objection is visible even to his own circle. Solid Sir James Chettam remarks that he is a man “with no good red blood in his body,” and Ladislaw curses him for “a cursed white-blooded pedantic coxcomb.” Their judgment is confirmed by all that we hear of him. He marries, we are told, because he wants “female tendance for his declining years. Hence he determined to abandon himself to the stream of feeling, and perhaps was surprised to find what an exceedingly shallow rill it was.” His petty jealousy and steady snubbing of his wife is all in character. Now we can pity a man for making a blunder, and perhaps, in some sense, we ought to “pity” him for having neither heart nor passion. But that is a kind of pity which is not akin to love. Dorothea's mistake was not that she married a man who had not read German, but that she married a stick instead of a man. The story, the more

fully we accept its truthfulness, becomes the more of a satire against young ladies who aim at lofty ideals. It implies a capacity for being imposed upon by a mere outside shell of pretence. Then we have to ask whether things are made better by her subsequent marriage to Ladislaw? That equally offended some readers, as George Eliot complained. Ladislaw is almost obtrusively a favourite with his creator. He is called "Will" for the sake of endearment; and we are to understand him as so charming that Dorothea's ability to keep him at a distance gives the most striking proof of her strong sense of wifely duty. Yet Ladislaw is scarcely more attractive to most masculine readers than the dandified Stephen Guest. He is a dabbler in art and literature; a small journalist, ready to accept employment from silly Mr. Brooke, and apparently liking to lie on a rug in the houses of his friends and flirt with their pretty wives. He certainly shows indifference to money, and behaves himself correctly to Dorothea, though he has fallen in love with her on her honeymoon. He is no doubt an amiable Bohemian, for some of whose peculiarities it would be easy to suggest a living original, and we can believe that Dorothea was quite content with her lot. But that seems to imply that a Theresa of our days has to be content with suckling fools and chronicling small beer. We are told, indeed, that Ladislaw became a reformer—apparently a "philosophical radical"—and even had the good luck to be returned by a constituency who paid his expenses. George Eliot ought to know; but I cannot believe in this conclusion. Ladislaw, I am convinced, became a brilliant journalist who could write smartly about

everything, but who had not the moral force to be a leader in thought or action. I should be the last person to deny that a journalist may lead an honourable and useful life, but I cannot think the profession congenial to a lofty devotion to ideals. Dorothea was content with giving him "wifely help"; asking his friends to dinner, one supposes, and copying his ill-written manuscripts. Many lamented that "so rare a creature should be absorbed into the life of another," though no one could point out exactly what she ought to have done. That is just the pity of it. There was nothing for her to do; and I can only comfort myself by reflecting that, after all, she had a dash of stupidity, and that more successful Therasas may do a good deal of mischief.

The next pair of lovers gives a less ambiguous moral. Lydgate, we are told, though we scarcely see it, was a man of great energy, with a high purpose. His ideal is shown by his ambition to be a leader in medical science. In contrast to Casaubon, he is thoroughly familiar with the latest authorities, and has a capacity for really falling in love. Unfortunately, Rosamond Viney is a model of one of the forms of stupidity against which the gods fight in vain. Being utterly incapable of even understanding her husband's aspirations, fixing her mind on the vulgar kind of success, and having the strength of will which comes from an absolute limitation to one aim, she is a most effective torpedo, and paralyses all Lydgate's energies. He is entangled in money difficulties; gives up his aspirations; sinks into a merely popular physician, and is sentenced to die early of diphtheria. A really strong man, such as Lydgate is supposed to be, might

perhaps have made a better fight against the temptation and escaped that slavery to a pretty woman which seems to have impressed George Eliot as the great danger to the other sex. But she never, I think, showed more power than in this painful history. The skill with which Lydgate's gradual abandonment of his lofty aims is worked out without making him simply contemptible, forces us to recognise the truthfulness of the conception. It is an inimitable study of such a fascination as the snake is supposed to exert upon the bird: the slow reluctant surrender, step by step, of the higher to the lower nature, in consequence of weakness which is at least perfectly intelligible. George Eliot's "psychological analysis" is here at its best; if it is not surpassed by the power shown in *Bulstrode*. *Bulstrode*, too, has an ideal of a kind; only it is the vulgar ideal which is suggested by a low form of religion. George Eliot shows the ugly side of the beliefs in which she had more frequently emphasised the purer elements. But she still judges without bitterness; and gives, perhaps, the most satisfactory portrait of the hypocrisy which is more often treated by the method of savage caricature. If he is not as amusing as a *Tartuffe* or a *Pecksniff*, he is marvellously lifelike. Nothing can be finer than the description of the curious blending of motives and the ingenious self-deception which enables *Bulstrode* to maintain his own self-respect. He is afraid of exposure by the scamp who has known his past history. "At six o'clock he had already been long dressed, and had spent some of his wretchedness in prayer, pleading his motives for averting the worst evil if in anything he had used falsity and spoken what was not true



before God. For Bulstrode shrank from a direct lie with an intensity disproportionate to the number of his direct misdeeds. But many of those misdeeds were like the subtle muscular movements which are not taken account of in the consciousness, though they bring about the end that we fix our mind on and desire. And it is only what we are naïvely conscious of that we can vividly imagine to be seen by Omniscience." The culminating scene in which Bulstrode comes to the edge of murder, and, though he does not kill his enemy, refrains from officiously saving life, is the practical application of the principles; and one is half inclined to think that there was some excuse for the proceeding.

It is, I think, to the force and penetration shown in such passages that *Middlemarch* owes its impressiveness. It shows George Eliot's reflective powers fully ripened and manifesting singular insight into certain intricacies of motive and character. There is, indeed, a correlative loss of the early power of attractiveness. The remaining pair of lovers, Mary Garth and Fred Vinoy, the shrewd young woman and the feeble young gentleman whom she governs, do not carry us away; and Caleb Garth, though he is partly drawn from the same original as Adam Bede, is unimpeachable, but a faint duplicate of his predecessor. The moral most obviously suggested would apparently be that the desirable thing is to do your work well in the position to which Providence has assigned you, and not to bother about "ideals" at all. *Il faut cultiver notre jardin* is an excellent moral, but it comes more appropriately at the end of *Candide* than at the end of a story which is to give us a modern Theresa.

one must  
cultivate  
his own  
garden.

This, I think, explains the rather painful impression which is made by *Middlemarch*. It is prompted by a sympathy for the enthusiast, but turns out to be virtually a satire upon the modern world. The lofty nature is to be exhibited struggling against the circumambient element of crass stupidity and stolid selfishness. But that element comes to represent the dominant and overpowering force. Belief is in so chaotic a state that the idealist is likely to go astray after false lights. Intellectual ambition mistakes pedantry for true learning; religious aspiration tempts acquiescence in cant and superstition; the desire to carry your creed into practice makes compromise necessary, and compromise passes imperceptibly into surrender. One is tempted to ask whether this does not exaggerate one aspect of the human tragicomedy. The unity, to return to our "parable," is to be the light carried by the observer in search of an idealist. In *Middlemarch* the light shows the aspirations of the serious actors, and measures their excellence by their capacity for such a motive. The test so suggested seems to give a rather onesided view of the world. The perfect novelist, if such a being existed, looking upon human nature from a thoroughly impartial and scientific point of view, would agree that such aspirations are rare and obviously impossible for the great mass of mankind. People, indisputably, are "mostly fools," and care very little for theories of life and conduct. But, therefore, it is idle to quarrel with the inevitable or to be disappointed at its results; and, moreover, it is easy to attach too much importance to this particular impulse. The world, somehow or other, worries along by means of very commonplace affections

and very limited outlooks. George Eliot, no doubt, fully recognises that fact, but she seems to be dispirited by the contemplation. The result, however, is that she seems to be a little out of touch with the actual world, and to speak from a position of philosophical detachment which somehow exhibits her characters in a rather distorting light. For that reason *Middlemarch* seems to fall short of the great masterpieces which imply a closer contact with the world of realities, and less preoccupation with certain speculative doctrines. Yet it is clearly a work of extraordinary power, full of subtle and accurate observation; and gives, if a melancholy, yet an undeniably truthful portraiture of the impression made by the society of the time upon one of the keenest observers, though upon an observer looking at the world from a certain distance, and rather too much impressed by the importance of philosophers and theorists.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### DANIEL DERONDA.

GEORGE ELIOT was to write one more novel, and one which was intended to give most clearly her message to mankind. In June 1874 she is "brewing her future big book." In February 1876 the first part was published; it came out in the same form as *Middlemarch*, in eight monthly parts, and had from the first a larger sale than its predecessor. Here again we have the doctrine of ideals, and expounded with even more emphasis. The story is really two stories put side by side and intersecting at intervals. Each gives a life embodying a principle, and each illustrates its opposite by the contrast. Gwendolen Harleth, a young lady with aspirations in a latent state, is misled into a worldly marriage, and though ultimately saved, is saved "as by fire." Daniel Deronda is throughout true to his higher nature, and is, in George Eliot's works, what Sir Charles Grandison is in Richardson's—the type of human perfection. The story of Gwendolen's marriage shows undiminished power. Here and there, perhaps, we have a little too much psychological analysis; but, after all, the reader who objects to psychology can avoid it by skipping a paragraph or two. It is another version of the old tragic motive: the paralysing influence of unmitigated



and concentrated selfishness, already illustrated by Tito and Rosamond. Grandcourt, to whom Gwendolen sacrifices herself, is compared to a crab or a boa-constrictor slowly pinching its victim to death: to appeal to him for mercy would be as idle as to appeal to "a dangerous serpent ornamentally coiled on her arm." He is a Tito in a further stage of development—with all better feelings atrophied, and enabled, by his fortune, to gratify his spite without exerting himself in intrigues. Like Tito, he suggests, to me at least, rather the cruel woman than the male autocrat. Some critic remarked, to George Eliot's annoyance, that the scenes between him and his parasite Lush showed the "imperious feminine, not the masculine character." She comforted herself by the statement that Bernal Osborne—a thorough man of the world—had commended these scenes as specially lifelike. I can, indeed, accept both views, for the distinction is rather too delicate for definite application. One feels, I think, that Grandcourt was drawn by a woman; but a sort of voluptuous enjoyment of malignant tyranny is unfortunately not confined to either sex. Anyhow, Gwendolen's ordeal is pathetic, and she excites more sympathy than any of George Eliot's victims. Perhaps she excites a little too much. At least, when she comes very near homicide (like Caterina in the Clerical Scenes and Bulstrode in *Middlemarch*), and withholds her hand from her drowning husband, one is strongly tempted to give the verdict, "Served him right." She, however, feels some remorse; and Daniel Deronda, who becomes her confessor, is much too admirable a being to give any sanction to this immoral source of consolation. She is

so charming in her way that we feel more interest in the criminal than in the confessor. "I have no sympathy," she says on one occasion, "with women who are always doing right." Perhaps that is the reason why we cannot quite bow the knee before Daniel Deronda.

That young gentleman is a model from the first. He has a "seraphic face." There is "hardly a delicacy of feeling" of which he is not capable—even when he is at Eton. He is so ethereal a being that we are a little shocked when he is mentioned in connection with *entrées*. One can't fancy an angel at a London dinner table. That is, indeed, the impression which he makes upon his friend. A family is created expressly to pay homage to him. They are supposed to have a sense of humour to make their worship more impressive; but they certainly keep it in the background when speaking of him. People, says one of the young ladies, must be content to take our brothers for husbands, because they can't get Deronda. "No woman ought to want to marry him," replies her sister . . . "fancy finding out that he had a tailor's bill and used boot-hooks, like our brother." Angels don't employ tailors. They compare him to his face to Buddha, who gave himself to a famishing tigress to save her and her cubs from starvation. To Gwendolen this peerless person naturally becomes an "outer conscience"; and when he exhorts her to use her past sorrow as a preparation for life, instead of letting it spoil her life, the words are to her "like the touch of a miraculous hand." She begins "a new existence," but it seems "inseparable from Deronda," and she longs that his presence may be permanent. Happily she does not dare to love him,

and hopes only to be bound to him by a "spiritual tie." That is just as well, because by a fortunate accident he has picked a perfect young Jewess out of the Thames, into which she had thrown herself, like Mary Wollstonecraft. Moreover, by another providential accident—Providence interferes rather to excess—he has walked into the city and stumbled upon a virtuous Jewish pawnbroker; and at the pawnbroker's has met the Jewess's long-lost brother Mordecai, who turns out to be as perfect as Deronda himself.

*famished*  
It must be admitted that the Jewish circle into which Deronda is admitted does not strike one as drawn from the life. That is only natural, as Mordecai is the incarnated pursuit of an ideal. Mordecai is devoted to the restoration of the Jewish nationality—a scheme which to the vulgar mind seems only one degree less chimerical than Zarka's plan for a gypsy nationality in Africa. It gives a chance to Deronda, however. For a perfect young man in a time of "social questions," he has hitherto been rather oddly at a loss for an end to which he can devote his powers. This is explained by a lengthy dissertation on his character. He is too good. "His plenteous flexible sympathy had ended by falling into one current with that reflective analysis which tends to neutralise sympathy." He is not vicious, but he "takes even vices mildly"; he is "fervidly democratic" from sympathy with the people, and yet "intensely conservative" from imagination and affection. He likes to be on the losing side in order to have the pleasure of martyrdom; but he is afraid that too much martyrdom will make him bitter. The solution comes by the discovery, strangely delayed by a combination of circumstances,

that he was a genuine Jew by birth. Now he can accept Mordecai for his prophet and take "heredity" for his guide. "You," he says to that inspired person, "have given shape to what, I believe, was an inherited yearning—the effect of brooding passionate thoughts in many ancestors—thoughts that seem to have been intensely present with my grandfather." He has always longed for an 'ideal task'—some "captainship, which should come to him as a duty and not be striven for as a personal prize." The "idea that I am possessed with," as he afterward explains, is "that of restoring a political existence to my people, making them a nation again, giving them a national centre such as the English, though they too are scattered over the face of the globe." It seems from her volume of essays (*Theophrastus Such*) that George Eliot considered this to be a reasonable investment of human energy. As we cannot all discover that we belong to the chosen people, and some of us might, even then, doubt the wisdom of the enterprise, one feels that Deronda's mode of solving his problem is not generally applicable. George Eliot's sympathy for the Jews, her aversion to Anti-Semitism, was thoroughly generous, and naturally welcomed by its objects. But taken as the motive of a hero it strikes one as showing a defective sense of humour. "One may understand jokes without liking them," says the musician Klesmer; and adds, "I am very sensible to wit and humour." There can be no doubt that George Eliot was very sensible to those qualities, and yet she refuses to perceive that Daniel Deronda is an amiable monomaniac and occasionally a very prosy moralist.



I must repeat that George Eliot was intensely feminine, though more philosophical than most women. She shows it to the best purpose in the subtlety and the charm of her portraits of women, unrivalled in some ways by any writer of either sex; and shows it also, as I think, in a true perception of the more feminine aspects of her male characters. Still, she sometimes illustrates the weakness of the feminine view. Daniel Deronda is not merely a feminine but, one is inclined to say, a schoolgirl's hero. He is so sensitive and scrupulously delicate that he will not soil his hands by joining in the rough play of ordinary political and social reformers. He will not compromise, and yet he shares the dislike of his creator for fanatics and the devotees of "fads." The monomaniac type is certainly disagreeable, though it may be useful. Deronda contrives to avoid its more offensive peculiarities, but at the price of devoting himself to an unreal and dreamy object. Probably, one fancies, he became disgusted in later life by finding that, after Mordecai's death, the people with whom he had to work had not the charm of that half-inspired visionary. He is, in any case, an idealist, who can only be provided with a task by a kind of providential interposition. The discovery that one can be carrying out one's grandfather's ideas is not generally a very powerful source of inspiration. "Heredity" represents an important factor in life, but can hardly be made into a religion. So far, therefore, as Deronda is an aesthetic embodiment of an ethical revelation—a judicious hint to a young man in search of an ideal—he represents an untenable theory. From the point of view of the simple novel reader he fails from unreality. George Eliot, in later years, came to know

several representatives in the younger generation of the class to which Deronda belonged. She speaks, for example, with great warmth of Henry Sidgwick. His friends, she remarks, by their own account, always "expected him to act according to a higher standard" than they would attribute to any one else or adopt for themselves. She sent Deronda to Cambridge soon after she had written this, and took great care to give an accurate account of the incidents of Cambridge life. I have always fancied—though without any evidence—that some touches in Deronda were drawn from one of her friends, Edmund Gurney, a man of remarkable charm of character, and as good-looking as Deronda. In the Cambridge atmosphere of Deronda's days there was, I think, a certain element of rough commonsense which might have knocked some of her hero's nonsense out of him. But, in any case, one is sensible that George Eliot, if she is thinking of real life at all, has come to see through a romantic haze which deprives the portrait of reality. The imaginative sense is declining, and the characters are becoming emblems or symbols of principle, and composed of more moonshine than solid flesh and blood. The Gwendolen story taken by itself is a masterly piece of social satire; but in spite of the approval of learned Jews, it is impossible to feel any enthusiastic regard for Deronda in his surroundings.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### CONCLUSION.

THE Leweses had been in the habit of recruiting their health in various country places in the neighbourhood of London, as well as in occasional trips to the Continent. In 1876 they bought a house at Witley, near Godalming, in the charming Surrey country which looks up to Hindhead and Blackdown. They were neighbours of Tennyson, who saw them occasionally both there and in town. An anecdote of a quarrel between them is refuted by Tennyson's son. What really happened was that, as she was leaving his house, Tennyson pressed her hand "kindly and sweetly" and said, "I wish you well with your molecules!" She replied as gently, "I get on very well with my molecules." Tennyson held that the flight of Hetty in *Adam Bede* and Thackeray's account of Colonel Newcome's decline were "the two most pathetic things in modern fiction." He greatly admired her insight into character, "but did not think her so true to nature as Shakespeare and Miss Austen." I will not argue upon such diets, though they are interesting in regard to both persons. George Eliot was more or less acquainted with other eminent writers of her time. The Leweses stayed with Mark Pattison at Oxford, and afterwards with

Jowett, who sent them the proof-sheets of his *Plato*. Dickens was friendly till his death, and she speaks with affection of Anthony Trollope, "one of the heartiest, most genuine, and moral men we know." Their life, however, continued to be secluded, and they thought of retiring altogether to Witley. Lewes was now working at his last book, the *Problems of Life and Mind*, but his health was beginning to break. He was taken ill at the "Priory" towards the end of 1878, and died on 28th November.

George Eliot was prostrated by the blow. The first employment to which she could devote herself was the arrangement of Lewes's unfinished work. She resolved to found a "George Henry Lewes studentship," which should enable some young man to carry on physiological research. Henry Sidgwick, Sir Michael Foster, and others gave her advice, and in the course of the year the plan was settled and a student elected. Gradually she revived. Her friend, Madame Bodichon, describes her in June 1879 as "wretchedly thin" and looking "in her long loose black dress like the black shadow of herself." Still, she said that "she had so much to do that she must keep well"; the world was so "intensely interesting." She had at this time published the last of her books, which had already been read and approved by Lewes. *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such* is a curious performance which certainly seems to suggest that her intellect—though not weakened—had somehow got into the least appropriate application of its energies. A short essay should above all things be bright and clear, and if it touches grave thoughts, touch them with a light hand. Nobody can call *Theophrastus Such* light



in its touch. The mannerism which showed itself occasionally in her first works, the ironical application of scientific analogies to trifling matters, sometimes hits the mark, but was always apt to become ponderous, if not pedantic. *Theophrastus Such* seems to be entirely composed of such matter, questionable, perhaps, at the best, and making the unpleasant impression of all laborious attempts at witticism. She had, for example, been disgusted, as every real lover of good literature must be disgusted, at flippant and irreverent burlesques. She protests against a practice which she calls "debasement of the moral currency." "And yet, it seems, parents will put into the hands of their children ridiculous parodies (perhaps with more ridiculous 'illustrations') of the poems which stirred their own tenderness and filial duty, and cause them to make their first acquaintance with great men, great works, or solemn crises, through the medium of some miscellaneous burlesque which, with its idiotic puns and farcical attitudes, will remain among their primary associations and reduce them throughout their time of studious preparation for life to the moral imbecility of an inward giggle at what might have stimulated the high emulation which fed the fountains of compassion, trust, and constancy." That may be very true, but surely it would be possible to put it a little more pointedly. George Eliot in writing these essays seems first to have got into the too didactic vein to which she was always prone, and then to have put her observations into the most tortuous and cumbrous shape by way of giving them an air of solemnity. What, one asks, had become of Mrs. Poyser? The book, however, succeeded well enough to satisfy her;

but I can hardly believe that anybody can now read it except from a sense of duty.

The remainder of George Eliot's life may be told in a few words. In 1867 Lewes had been introduced by Mr. Herbert Spencer to Mrs. Cross, a lady then living at Weybridge with a daughter, Miss Elizabeth D. Cross, who had just published a volume of poems. Miss Cross was invited by Lewes to see George Eliot, and a friendship sprang up between the families. In 1869 the Leweses paid a visit to the Crosses at Weybridge, and the friendship became intimacy. The death of Lewes's son, Thornton, and of a married daughter of Mrs. Cross within the next two months, strengthened the bond by mutual sympathy. Mr. John Walter Cross, son of Mrs. Cross, then a banker at New York, was staying at Weybridge during George Eliot's visit, and soon afterwards settled in England in his mother's house. He became very intimate with the Leweses, and frequently visited them at Witley. After Lewes's death he was an able and sympathetic adviser. His mother had died a week after Lewes, and he was anxious to find relief and occupation in some new pursuit. He began to read Dante, and George Eliot proposed to help him in his studies. From that time they saw each other constantly; and as George Eliot's spirit recovered from the shock, she began again to find pleasure in music and in visiting the National Gallery. The support of Mr. Cross's companionship relieved her sense of desolation, and in April 1880 they decided upon marriage. The marriage took place on 6th May, and the only possible comment is her own statement to Mme. Bodichon. "Mr. Cross's family," she says, "welcome me with the utmost

tenderness. All this is wonderful blessing falling to me beyond my share after I had thought that life was ended, and that, so to speak, my coffin was ready for me in the next room. Deep down below there is a river of sadness, but this must always be with those who have lived long—and I am able to enjoy my newly reopened life. I shall be a better, more loving creature than I could have been in solitude. To be contently, lovingly grateful for the gift of a perfect love is the best illumination of one's mind to all the possible good there may be in store for man on this troublous little planet."

The Crosses made a tour after their marriage, staying some time at Venice, and returning to Witley by the end of July. Her health seemed at first to have greatly improved, and she was able to take walks and to see sights during the journey. After returning to England, she had a serious attack in September, followed by a partial recovery. On 4th December the Crosses moved into a new house which they had taken at 4 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. A fortnight later a slight chill brought on a fresh attack. Her previous illness had weakened her power of rallying, and she died on 22nd December 1880.

George Eliot's main personal characteristics should be sufficiently indicated by what I have already said. A few remarks, however, may help to complete the picture. Among her active employments she found time to lead the life of an industrious student. Though frequently interrupted by ill-health, she was capable of sustained and severe attention to difficult subjects. The list of her accomplishments acquired at different periods is a long one. She had a thorough knowledge

of French, German, Italian, and Spanish, and could talk in each language correctly, though "with difficulty." She could read the classical languages with pleasure; and kept up her familiarity with the great masterpieces of all periods by frequent re-reading. She was fond of reading aloud, especially Milton and the Bible; and a fine voice, perfectly under command, gave peculiar power to her rendering of solemn and majestic passages. Hebrew was a favourite study; and though she read little of the lighter literature of the day, she had a very retentive memory of the novels—George Sand's, for example—which she had read in her youth. She read a good many historical works, and, as we have seen, could get up minute antiquarian details with unflagging industry. Besides her main studies, she had dipped into scientific writings, had at one time taken to geometry, and thought that she had some aptitude for mathematics. Her interest in the philosophical speculations of the time we have sufficiently indicated. Her powers of assimilating knowledge were, in fact, extraordinary, and it may safely be said that no novelist of mark ever possessed a wider intellectual culture. With all her knowledge, she attended to the ordinary feminine duties. She was proud of her good housekeeping, and her early training and love of order had given her a thorough knowledge of how such matters should be done. She sympathised, of course, with projects for reforming female education, and was one of the first subscribers to Girton College. She had, however, a characteristic misgiving lest a university system might weaken the bonds of family life. The feminine qualities are as characteristic of the student as of the writer. She



read reverently, with a desire to appreciate and admire. The critical, or rather scoffing attitude of mind, was intensely antipathetic to her. She seems to have loved especially the gentler and more serious observers of life, such as Goldsmith and Cowper and Miss Austen; and venerated such great men as Dante and Milton ("her demi-god," as she calls him), whose austerity breathes a lofty moral sentiment. She rarely expresses her antipathies; but one instance is characteristic. Of Byron she speaks with disgust, as the "most vulgar-minded genius that ever produced a great effect in literature." The author of *Don Juan* could not well be congenial to the creator of *Fedalma*. Women, it is said, are wanting in humour; and perhaps for the obvious reason that the humorist is apt to find that the easiest roads of making a point lie through profanity or indecency. George Eliot's sense of humour was undeniably keen, but she will not give play to it when it takes the offensive. That need not be regretted. It is a less satisfactory result when her desire to sympathise with all high impulses leads her in her later stories to shut her eyes to the comic side, which forces itself upon the less restrained humorists, and to present us with model characters verging too decidedly upon priggishness. A touch of pedagogic severity saddens her view of the frivolous world. Her profound conviction of the mischief done by stupidity, of the clogging and degrading effect of the general atmosphere of commonplace upon aspiring souls, diminishes her appreciation of fools, and *Theophrastus Such* suggests even a tinge of sourness. George Eliot, we are told, took little interest in contemporary politics. During the war of 1870 she reminds a friend of the

famous anecdote of Goethe's indifference to the Revolution of 1830 as compared with the controversies of Cuvier and Saint-Hilaire. She says that it is impossible to "do off aside" the French and German war after that fashion. In general, however, she seems to have accepted Goethe's attitude, and to have been more interested in the advances of scientific thought than in the reforming energies of Gladstone's first government. She thought that political matters in England were managed by "amateurs," that their quarrels involved a growing quantity of personal abuse and imputation of unworthy motive. That is a natural impression of the philosophical looker-on; and I need not ask whether active politicians are justified in meeting it with simple contempt. Her sympathy with the positivists predisposed her, moreover, to think more of the slow operation of changed ideals than of particular political changes. Her interest in positivism was always strong. She was on terms of intimate friendship with Dr. Congreve, Mr. Frederic Harrison, and Professor Beesly, and subscribed to the funds of the central body. She did not, indeed, accept positivist doctrines unreservedly, and had by her side a keen critic in George Lewes, who had followed Comte's early teaching, but repudiated the theories of social reconstruction propounded in the later *Politique Positive*. Both, it appears, regarded it as "a Utopia, presenting hypotheses rather than doctrines," and she could sympathise with Comte as "an individual" trying "to anticipate the work of future generations." The special point of sympathy was, of course, the aspect with which the Comtists regarded the old creeds as stages in the continuous evolution of

humanity. In that respect, too, George Eliot was eminently feminine. She had the strong religious instinct common to so many noble women in whose sympathy masculine reformers have found comfort amidst the harsh controversies and struggles of active work. The history of her books is on one side a history of the consequent development of her mind. Her intellectual expansion led her to accept the teaching of the men who represented for her the most advanced thought of the time. But the aggressiveness which it generated for a time was a transitory frame of mind. The first series of novels represents the fond dwelling upon all the loftier impulses which had uttered themselves in stammering and imperfect dialects prescribed by dogmas no longer tenable; while the later correspond to a longing to find an utterance reconcilable with full acceptance of scientific truth. Daniel Deronda, one fancies, would have embodied her sentiments more completely if, instead of devoting himself to the Jews, he had become a leading prophet in the church of humanity. That, no doubt, would have brought him into too close a contact with notorious facts.

I have said that George Eliot's peculiar place among the novelists of the time was in some sense determined by the philosophical tendencies which were shared by none of her contemporaries. I do not mean to imply that it was her proper function to propagate any philosophical doctrine, and have tried to point out the defects due to her inclinations in that direction. Novels should, I take it, be transfigured experience; they should be based upon the direct observation and the genuine emotions which it has inspired: when

they are deliberately intended to be a symbolism of any general formula, they become unreal as representative of fact, and unsatisfactory as philosophical exposition. George Eliot's early success and the faults of her later work illustrate, I have said, the right and wrong methods. But, in conclusion, I may try to indicate what seems to me to be the quality which, in spite of inevitable shortcomings in undertaking the impossible, gives the permanent interest of her works. That, I think, appears most simply by regarding them as implicit autobiography. George Eliot gives a direct picture of the England of her early days, and, less directly, a picture of its later developments. Her picture of the old country life owes its charm to the personal memories, and may possibly have a little personal colouring. If a novelist could be thoroughly "realistic," and give the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, there would no doubt be a good deal to add to the descriptions of the life at Shepperton and Dorlcote Mill. But, then, I do not believe that any human intellect can give the whole truth about anything. What can be given truly is the impression made upon the mind of the observer; and when the observer has a mind of such reflective power, so much insight, and such tenderness and sensibility as George Eliot's, its impressions will correspond to realities, and reveal most interesting though not all-comprehensive truths. The combination of an exquisitely sympathetic and loving nature with a large and tolerant intellect is manifest throughout. George Eliot could see the absurdities, and even the brutalities, of her neighbours plainly, but understood them well enough to make them intelligible, not mere absurdities to be caricatured;



she saw the charming aspects of the old order with equal clearness, but has no illusions which would convert the country into a pretty Arcadia; and her sympathy with sorrow and unsatisfied longings is too deep and reflective to allow her to stray into mere sentimentalism. Her pathos is powerful because it is always under command. The more superficial writer treats an era of misery as implying a grievance which can be summarily removed, or finds in it an opportunity of exhibiting his own sensibility. Her feeling is too deep and her perception of the complexity of its causes too thorough to admit of such treatment. We see the tender woman who has gone through much experience, always devotedly attached by the strongest ties of affection; but always reflecting, shrinking from excesses of passion or of scoffing, and trying to see men and life as parts of a wider order.

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The same personal element appears in her later work in spite of the defects which I take to be undeniable. George Eliot, as we have seen, looked on the world with a certain aloofness. She read little of the ephemeral literature of the day, and apparently thought very ill of what she did read. She looked at the political warfare from a distance, and did not go into the society deeply interested in such matters. The "Priory" was frequented by a circle whose talk was of philosophy and scientific discoveries, and which was more interested in theories than in the gossip of the day. She had not therefore the experience which could enable her to describe contemporary life, with its social and political ambitions and the rough struggle for existence in which practical lawyers and men of business are mainly occupied. She thinks of the

world chiefly as the surrounding element of sordid aims into which her idealists are to go forth with such hope as may be of leavening the mass. She could not, therefore, draw lifelike portraits of such characters as were the staple of the ordinary novelist. The questions, however, in which she was profoundly interested were undeniably of the highest importance. The period of her writings was one in which, as we can now see more clearly than at the time, very significant changes were taking place in English thought and life. Controversies on "evolutionism" and socialism and democracy were showing the set of the current. George Eliot's heroes and heroines are all more or less troubled by the results, whether they live ostensibly in England or in distant countries and centuries. I need say nothing more of her special view of the questions at issue. But, incidentally, as one may say, she came, in treating of her favourite theme—the idealist in search of a vocation—to exhibit her own characteristics. The long gallery of heroines, from Milly Barton to Gwendolen Harleth, have various tasks set to them, in which we may be more or less interested. But the women themselves, whatever their outward circumstances, have an interest unsurpassed by any other writer. They have, of course, a certain family likeness; and if Maggie is most like her creator, the others show an affinity to some of her characteristics. George Eliot is reported to have said that the character which she found most difficult to support was that of Rosamond Vincy, the young woman who paralyses Lydgate. One can understand the statement, for it is Rosamond's function to do exactly what is most antipathetic to her biographer.

She is the embodied contradictory of her creator's morality. Yet she, too, is a vigorous portrait, and the whole series may be given triumphantly as a proof of what is called "knowledge of the human heart." I dislike the phrase, because it seems to imply that an abstract science with that subject-matter is in existence—which I should certainly deny. But if it only means that George Eliot could—without any formula—sympathise with a singularly wide range of motive and feeling, and especially with noble and tender natures, and represent the concrete embodiment with extraordinary power, then I can fully subscribe to the opinion. I think, as I have said, that one is always conscious that her women are drawn from the inside, and that her most successful men are substantially women in disguise. But the two sexes have a good deal in common; and in the setting forth some of the moral and intellectual processes which we can all understand, George Eliot shows unsurpassable skill. Here and there, no doubt, there is too much explicit "psychological analysis," and a rather ponderous enumeration of obvious aphorisms in the pomp of scientific analogy. But she is singularly powerful in describing the conflicts of emotions; the ingenious modes of self-deception in which most of us acquire considerable skill; the uncomfortable results of keeping a conscience till we have learnt to come to an understanding with it; the grotesque mixture of motives which results when we have reached a *modus vivendi*; the downright hypocrisy of the lower nature, or the comparatively pardonable and even commendable state of mind of the person who has a thoroughly consistent code of action, though he unconsciously interprets its

laws in a non-natural sense to suit his convenience. George Eliot's power of watching and describing the various manœuvres by which people keep their self-respect and satisfy their feelings shows her logical subtlety, which appears again in her quaint description of the odd processes which take the place of reasoning in the uneducated intelligence.

George Eliot believed that a work of art not only may, but must, exercise also an ethical influence. I will not inquire how much influence is actually exerted by novels upon the morality of their readers; but so far as any influence is exerted, it is due, I think, in the last resort to the personality of the novelist. That is to say, that from reading George Eliot's novels we are influenced in the same way as by an intimacy with George Eliot herself. Undoubtedly, in effect, that might vary indefinitely according to the prejudices and character of the other party. But, in any case, we feel that the writer with whom we have been in contact possessed a singularly wide and reflective intellect, a union of keen sensibility with a thoroughly tolerant spirit, a desire to appreciate all the good hidden under the commonplace and narrow, a lively sympathy with all the nobler aspirations, a vivid insight into the perplexities and delusions which beset even the strongest minds, brilliant powers of wit, at once playful and pungent, and, if we must add, a rather melancholy view of life in general, a melancholy which is not nursed for purposes of display, but forced upon a fine understanding by the view of a state of things which, we must admit, does not altogether lend itself to a cheerful optimism. I have endeavoured to point out what limitations must be adopted by an



honest critic. George Eliot's works, as I have read, have not, at the present day, quite so high a position as was assigned to them by contemporary enthusiasm. That is a common phenomenon enough; and, in her case, I take it to be due chiefly to the partial misdirection of her powers in the later period. But when I compare her work with that of other novelists, I cannot doubt that she had powers of mind and a richness of emotional nature rarely equalled, or that her writings—whatever their shortcomings—will have a corresponding value in the estimation of thoughtful readers.

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